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THE

MAY 1917

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

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George Washington
Ogden
and Others

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STORY OF
TARZAN"

A COMPLETE
NOVEL by
Nina Wilcox Putnam
and
Norman Jacobsen

*Beginning
a New Serial
by Henry M. Neely*

J.P.M. Koloky

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THE BLUE BOOK

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DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor.

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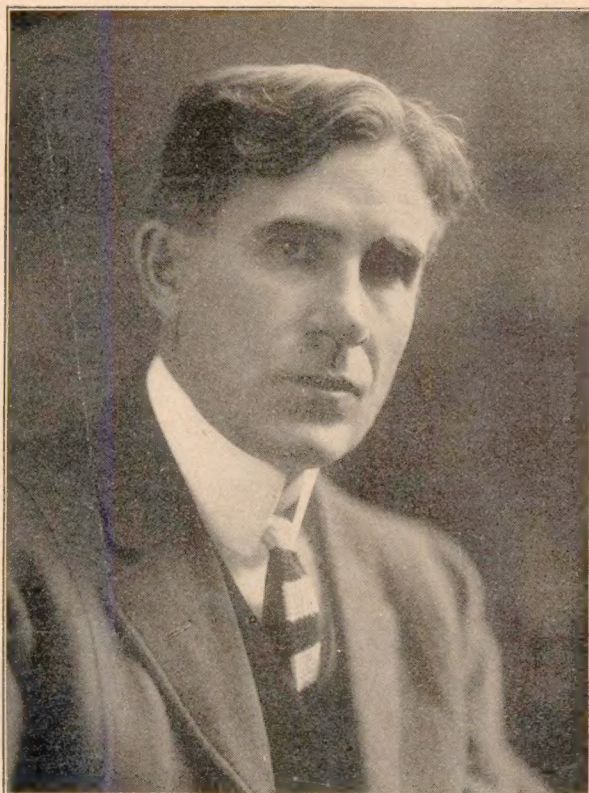
A joyous tale of a tenderfoot who makes good in Wyoming. Miss Putnam was the author of that memorable BLUE BOOK success, "Adam's Garden."

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Will begin in the June issue of
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May

1917

THE
BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. XXV

No 1



Explaining *the* Villain

by
**Will
Payne**

THE three men reached the White House at almost the same time and were shown in to the President at five minutes past five.

Entering, they felt at once the atmosphere of a crisis. The President greeted them in a subdued and toneless voice, without the glimmer of a smile. When they were seated, he spoke again:

"I have a very serious matter to lay before you, gentlemen. We have just received Whipple's report on the *Bronx* affair. I will read it to you."

There were only four persons in the room, all of them middle-aged, in sack coats and unstarched shirts—Sansom's hair, as usual, in need of combing. A group just like them in general aspect might have been discovered at the same moment in a thousand offices, hotel-lobbies and smoking-rooms between the two oceans, the Canadian line and the Rio Grande. But as the man at the head of the table read on, a portentous presence invisibly filled the room.

It was a quarter after six when they arose—all with a heaviness of mind, absorbed, unsmiling. At the door the President spoke low:

"Members of the Cabinet will be here

at eight o'clock; but no meeting is to be announced." He paused an instant, his grave eyes passing over one face after another. "Announcements are particularly what we do not want just now. A million lives may be involved in this. Be careful, gentlemen."

They murmured acquiescence and went out, each so preoccupied that, being out of doors, they separated without even a nod.

The youngest and tallest of them—James Sansom, acting as chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations during the illness of Senator Barnes—struck across Pennsylvania Avenue and through Lafayette Square. At forty-six he was serving his third term in the Senate, and he had been elected to the House in his twenty-sixth year. His walk was a flow of high-gearred nervous energy driving a tall, gangling frame—head bent, gray eyes only mechanically noting the turning of the path, an absent-minded line down the middle of his forehead under the brim of a well-worn slouch hat. His thick, unruly hair was darkish red; his face, with square brow, solid chin and generous nose, was smooth-shaven and high-colored. It was a homely high

color, forceful and common rather than mellow, and no one would have dreamed of calling him handsome; yet he was a man at whom people looked with interest, for he was stamped with temperament and individuality.

It was after half-past six when he reached home—quite dark then, windy and with the beginning of a winterish drizzle. The locality was one which Fashion, by extreme indulgence, might just dimly know about. The house was a two-story brick affair, undeniably shabby and commonplace except that the ugly iron steps and front door had been torn out and replaced by a quite charming little white-arched Colonial doorway.

THE slam of the front door as he closed it behind him still echoed when his wife hastened out of the living-room to greet him. She was forty and had borne three children since their marriage ten years before; but she was a pretty woman still, with the supple figure of youth and smooth, slightly dusky cheeks. She kissed him and at fuller view of his somber face dropped against his breast murmuring:

"Jim, dear, don't worry any more! We'll work out of it. Haven't we always worked out of things? It kills me to see that line down your forehead all the time."

It was intimate and tender, the murmurous touch of a woman's heart to a man's; and it warmed through Sansom's breast as he realized that she was thinking of something far as the poles from the matter that occupied his mind.

"Oh, it isn't that, Puss!" he assured her. "I'm not thinking about that thing at all! It's something a heap worse than that."

He put his arm around her, loverlike. They went into the living-room and sat close together on the divan, and there he told her in a subdued voice the portentous matter which the President had unfolded.

They were not precisely alone in the living-room. Sansom's sister Ann—five years older than himself—sat at the upright piano in the corner, clumsily picking out an air from a musical comedy. The air was entitled "You're

the Sweetest Little Pansy in the Bunch." The performance was slow, heavy, with many pauses and repetitions. It might have reminded one of a patriarchal and rheumatic dromedary gravely attempting to waltz. Ann had an absurd habit of doing that in the leisure half-hour before dinner. The pair on the divan were too absorbed this evening to derive their usual amusement from it, or even to be distinctly aware of the heavy, hesitant tinkling of the piano.

"My little trouble looks trivial enough beside that," Sansom commented presently; then, with a short and melancholy laugh that ended in a stifled sigh: "If I'm broke, I'll soon have plenty of company. There'll be a panic in Wall Street when this news comes out."

A LITTLE before eight o'clock that evening Thomas Kersey's butler, opening the front door in response to a ring, found himself confronted by a tall, angular, aging woman in a shabby mackintosh and ancient hat, under a dripping umbrella.

His look of cold detachment (preface to a statement that the kitchen door was to be found at the rear of the house) melted into a butlerish smile when she lowered the umbrella so that he saw her face clearly and when she said: "Miss Sansom—I wish to see Mr. Kersey." Everywhere in Washington the Senator's name was a sound of power; besides, the butler knew the Senator's unfashionable sister was welcome in that house on her own account. He opened wide the door, took her soggy wraps and stood modestly by while she manfully removed her large wet rubbers.

A moment later a fat, gray little man bounced genially into the parlor, holding out his hand with a smothery chuckle like the purring of a plump old cat. The things he admired in people were courage, loyalty, humor, horse-sense. He liked Ann Sansom immensely—"a regular soldier, a good old scout," he called her to himself with his fat, smothery chuckle.

He made a joke, but she responded feebly; and with a better look at her, he sensed an affair of urgency and

moment, and so subdued his own manner. For a preliminary moment they just sat looking at each other—the broker well-groomed and in a dinner-coat, with an expectant, sympathetic smile; Ann wholly grave.

Her dress was shabby, her reddish hair—now scant and heavily streaked with gray—just twisted into a ragged knot. The big hands, folded in her lap, looked more familiar with dishwater and scrubbing-brush than with lotions and manicure-implements. She was a hopelessly homely woman—only her full, limpid brown eyes were beautiful, if one were discriminating enough to notice that amidst their unpromising environment.

"I WISH to tell you something," she said. "It will take a little time." She spoke slowly, choosing her words with a kind of conscientious deliberation, very much as she carefully picked out the meat, fish and vegetables when, every day, she did the family marketing.

"Oh, by all means!" Kersey encouraged cordially.

"I brought Jim up. I know him like a book." She proceeded, one carefully plodding word after the other. "He's like the engine in your automobile. Keep him running strong, and he can climb anything; but if you slow him down to a couple of miles an hour, any little bump will stop him."

Kersey nodded and purred in appreciation of the simile.

"He's always been that way—temperamental, I suppose you would call it. Jim—is the ablest man in public life in the United States to-day, and he'll go the farthest; only you've got to keep him running strong. That's been my job ever since he was a little youngster in school and would come home all gloom and despair because the teacher had held him up to ridicule or something like that. Of course, when he was a youngster, I could just crank him up by hand, as you might say, and start him off again. But lately it hasn't been as easy as that.

"You see, Jim went fast, with a crowd cheering. He was elected to the State legislature when he was twenty-

three and to the House when he was twenty-five. This is his third term in the Senate. His oratory made him famous when nobody outside their own districts knew who most of the people down here were. He was always getting higher, you see, with the motor running strong and the sun shining. Jim needed that. Give him that stimulation, and nothing can keep him from going to the top. He never had any time or inclination to bother about money. He never had time even to care for any for himself, as long as he had street-car fare and a quarter for lunch. All his life his income has been just his salary.

"He married. You understand, I'm not criticising Julia. She's a fine woman. She loves him; she's devoted to him. Of course, Jim was wild about her, and getting her just gave him that much more success—more stimulation, you see. She's a woman with brains, too, and she's helped him in politics. I love her myself. But it was awfully unlucky, in a way, that she was thinking about just the same things he was thinking of and never had any more time or inclination to bother about money than he did. Both of them considered money only a temporary and trifling detail, like whether there was going to be spinach for dinner or peas. When they got in the White House, the salary would be sufficient. Julia couldn't endure the homely front door, and so the landlord let her tear it out and put in a pretty one at Jim's expense. That's how strong she is on economics.

"There are three children. Probably you know something, theoretically, about the cost of living these last half-dozen years, and especially now. I could tell you something about it practically, for I really run the house. Mrs. Chamberlain told me confidentially the other day that she thought it was perfectly wonderful of Julia to run her house with three children and keep up as good an appearance as she did with only Jim's salary for income.

"I could have explained to her that there wasn't anything very wonderful about it. There's one maid-of-all-work, or sort of a maid. Mostly just a sort of a maid, I should say. I'm up

at a quarter to six every morning to bathe and dress Agnes and Billy and give them their breakfasts. And it's usually half-past nine when I sit down to look over the evening newspaper, before putting arnica on my back and going to bed. I'm glad to do it. It's my job.

"But the last two years, since Billy was born, I haven't been able to keep up with the bills by a mile. In fact, when I look back over the last five years, it seems to me we've drifted astern as though a fast cruiser was towing us. . . .

"It's just about five years ago that Jim began to slow down a bit. I suppose you can't explain the psychology of a temperamental person, and for a long while Jim hasn't talked much to me. Naturally, he would talk to his wife, and being a busy man, he wouldn't have much household conversation left after that. I've been a busy woman, too. We haven't talked much of late years. But I brought him up. I know him like a book. I could see it and feel it—getting more or less cloudy, you know, the sun not shining real bright any more, some bumps in the road. The going wasn't quite what it used to be. For one thing, he passed forty. The newspapers kept up their habit of calling him a young man, but a person past forty is bound to take that with a grain of salt. Newer leaders of liberal politics were coming up and getting a lot of attention.

"I know as well as though he had told me that he had bad spells when he asked himself whether maybe he hadn't gone just as far as he was ever going to get. For a man like Jim, that's a terrible thought. Two years ago, you know, there had been quite a change in political fashions—a reaction, the newspapers called it. He had the hardest fight of his life to get reelected then—fighting like the dickens, you see, not to get farther ahead, but just to stay where he was. The money-trouble kept getting worse. You can be so high-minded that your forehead is bumping the sky, but all the same it's humiliating to have to stand off the grocer.

"It ground Jim. His motor was

slowing down. I could see it well enough, but I couldn't do anything except serve hash oftener and make over little Janet's dresses once more for littler Agnes. Then Bishoff came along. He is a boy from the old home town, son of a photographer Jim has known all his life. He is a dreamy young man, and I think he meant well. He had a wonderful process for colored photography—something that would revolutionize the movies and make a fortune. Julia was all taken up with it. She and Jim studied photography enough to think they understood Bishoff's ideas.

"SO Jim went in with him, to develop the process and get patents and so on. You can understand what a little fortune would mean to him. Of course, the only capital he had was his name, and so he signed that to notes with Bishoff. And that started him all up again. You see, with a little fortune he would be free of all the petty worries and humiliations and could go ahead lickety-split. He was himself again, sun shining and the motor running strong. Well, the Bishoff affair dragged along and dragged along and took more money instead of bringing any in. Over a month ago Jim got a bad jolt about it. For the first time he got the idea that it might not turn out a success.

"Well, two weeks ago I got hold of Bishoff myself and talked to him man to man. His wonderful process is no good. There are thirty thousand dollars of notes outstanding. It's only a question of how long he can keep Jim from finding it out. I will say for the young man that he's terribly cut up about it—scared out of his wits at the thought of facing Jim with the bald truth.

"Now that's the situation, Mr. Kersey. I needn't tell you that a man isn't in politics twenty-five years without making plenty of enemies. Jim has always held his head high and hit hard. Plenty of people are aching for a good chance to hit back. The fight is pretty bitter between the kind of politics that wants to go ahead and the kind that wants to hold back. The kind that wants to hold back is supported by a

lot of powerful newspapers, and those newspapers have got it in for Jim, all right. They never miss a chance to shy a brick at him now. There's nothing in his political record that gives them any handle against his character. But you can see what a godsend this thing would be for them.

"It would be Senator James Sansom, with thirty thousand dollars of notes outstanding that he couldn't pay—notes given for a fool process to improve the moving-picture industry. You know all the changes they would play on that tune, and how the cartoonists would nail it to him. It's a whole lot easier to kill a man with ridicule than to kill him with truth. I know Jim, Mr. Kersey. He simply couldn't stand it. It would kill him dead. That's what you get for being temperamental."

"I see," the broker murmured sympathetically. Worrying the stubby little white mustache with the end of a plump finger and thumb, he considered an instant; then he looked up at her with a faint twinkle and inquired softly: "Thirty thousand, you say?" His check-book was in the next room.

Without catching the implication, Miss Sansom proceeded in her slow, methodical manner: "I've told you the whole story. I wanted you to know it. That's why I want to sell stocks."

HE looked blank, and she went on deliberately: "I've thought it over for two hours, and I've decided to do it. I know it's a crime, but I take it on my own conscience. There's not only Jim, but there are three children—two of them only babies. Heaven knows what would become of them if anything happened to Jim. It's no way for a family to be situated. If I'm ready to commit a crime, that's my own business. Only, of course, I didn't know how to sell stocks. I came to you because I knew you could tell me how."

"But why," asked the baffled broker, "do you wish to sell stocks?"

For a moment she looked down at the floor, and one work-roughened hand rose from her lap to her lips. Then she refolded her hands in her lap, looked at him steadily and replied calmly: "Since I'm going into it, I may just as

well tell you the whole thing. Our ambassador's report on the sinking of the *Bronx* came in this afternoon. That was a naval supply-ship, you know, and everybody has supposed there'd be a declaration that it was all an accident, full apology, offer to punish the officer that did it, and so on. Well, it's nothing of the kind. It's just about the opposite. Substantially they say that if we don't want our ships sunk, we'd better put 'em away in the back yard until the war is over. The Cabinet is in session now. The President is going to send an ultimatum before tomorrow night. Jim didn't tell me this, you understand. He told his wife; but I was sitting in the room and overheard. He said there'd be a panic in the stock-market when the news came out."

The chubby little broker had sat up straight, staring at her, his hands on his knees and his head tipped to one side, like that of an overfed but alert house-dog.

He asked her half a dozen questions in quick succession, touching details of the affair and just how she overheard—his manner extremely alert and his small, good-humored, slightly bloodshot eyes twinkling as with eagerness for a fray.

"I know it's a crime," she said again. "It's a crime Jim would abhor with every nerve in his body. If he found it out, he'd never forgive me for it—never in this world or the next. If I met him in heaven, he'd glare at me and go to the other side of the street. All the same, I've made up my mind that it's my job."

As her soft brown eyes, in the homely face that seemed not to belong with them, rested upon Kersey's, the heart in his fat old chest felt the stir and pull of an ancient motive—a woman sacrificing herself for those she loved.

He nodded at her, chuckled gently and said with unction: "We'll go against it! We'll go against it!"

THEY were at the breakfast table, and a somber passion possessed Senator James Sansom; his gray eyes, under contracted brows, hotly smoldered with it. In intervals of eating, the muscles of his jaw worked like

those of a man who is yearning to ball his fist and strike somebody in the face. A morning newspaper lay at either side of his plate, bearing great black front-page headlines. From time to time the Senator glanced down at the paper on his right. Its top headline read: "Leak investigation." He had come from a long night-session of the Senate, had had four hours' sleep, and was going back when he had drunk his coffee. His wife, anxious over his drawn face and overcast by the general scandal, forbore to question him.

"It's too infamous!" he blazed out at length in a kind of straining groan. "It's unbearable! It fills a man with despair! We were at the verge of war. For hours the nation hung in the balance, and yet these awful thieves must have their pickings and stealings. They can't even wait a decent hour until the President speaks publicly. They must bribe somebody to tell what he is going to say and then rush in to grab their filthy dollars out of blood and agony—for fear, if they do wait a decent hour, there won't be quite so many for them to grab!

"It fills a man with despair!" he repeated. "Suppose we were at war. We would be calling upon a million men to step out and offer their lives for their country. And every one of those men would know that somebody here at Washington, somebody close to the inmost springs of government, had betrayed his country, betrayed a government confidence, sold out the United States, by giving away a vital state secret to that rotten gang of gamblers in Wall Street, so they could rig the stock market and fleece the lambs.

"Imagine a man marching out to die and knowing there was some such traitor here at his back, close to the government, maybe ready to sell him out to the enemy! If the President had made it an ultimatum with a twenty-four-hour limit, as he first thought of doing, and if we were at war, I wouldn't blame those million men if they began by marching down here and stringing a dozen or so of us up to lamp-posts just by way of warning. It is the most detestable crime and treason that has happened in my lifetime."

HE set his jaw and added with an ominous pleasure: "But the villains won't get away with it this time! This is the straw too much. Burbage and Gleason and I fought all night for an investigation with teeth in it. We're going to have our way, too. You'll see before night! We are morally certain Kersey was in it. He took the midnight train for New York Wednesday and was down in Wall Street bright and early Thursday. We've found that out absolutely. We're as good as morally certain that he and his pals up there were selling stocks right and left all Thursday forenoon. We'll find out very soon exactly how much stock they sold and who they sold it for. Every book and paper in his office has been seized by this time. We'll have every book and paper of those pals of his in Wall Street, too. We'll put experts at them, and it's just a question of tracing the thing down.

"This isn't going to be one of those polite investigations that warn everybody a month in advance so they can cover up their tracks—nor one of those that puts a man on the stand and asks him if he please won't tell us something that we can use to convict him with. Oh, no! We'll pounce right on their backs the first thing. Kersey and Bradley and Hibbard and the Wall Street chaps will tell what they know, because we'll have the goods on them. We're going to get the rascals this time. The villain in this play isn't going to escape."

He was full of wrath and exasperation—partly from the all-night wrangle to get the sort of investigation he wanted. His wife echoed fervently: "Oh, I hope so, Jim!"

They might have noticed that Sister Ann had a poor appetite, only tasting the oatmeal, nibbling the toast and sipping at the coffee. Food seemed to choke her. Her face was not as highly colored as usual, but wore a wan tinge; there were circles under her brown eyes, in which lay a deep woe. For one thing, she had slept little the last two nights. For another, being the first one up, she had had time to look at the morning newspapers a good hour before breakfast.

In the pause that followed Julia's exclamation, there was a long moment during which Ann was mightily urged to put down her coffee-cup, fold her rough hands on the edge of the table and say humbly, with a broken heart:

"I did it myself, Jim. I wanted to get you out of your trouble and make you comfortable about money so you could go on with your big work and be happy. I wanted to provide something for the children. I knew it was a crime, but I thought I could do it unknown to anybody but myself and Tom Kersey. I never dreamed there would be all this commotion about it."

She was mightily urged, and had a feeling that it would be the easiest way. Yet her lips did not move. To look her brother in the face and say those words was, after all, a sheer physical impossibility. He left the house, absorbed and somber, without her speaking to him at all.

ANN was amazed over this tremendous public explosion in the newspapers. It hadn't occurred to her that anything like that would happen. She had supposed she could commit her dark little crime quite in secret, with nobody but Thomas Kersey knowing about it, and no ripple of it ever appearing on the surface of events.

But here it was out in the open, mountain high, with the whole United States sitting up and staring at it in astonished wrath!

She realized that it did not lie in her mouth to accuse any man; yet she couldn't help some bitterness of heart toward Thomas Kersey. Surely, it seemed, he had no need to let all Wall Street into the secret. He might have shown some moderation, instead—as Jim said—of selling stocks right and left for hours. Yet maybe if she asked him to make some money for her out of this state secret, it was an implicit part of the bargain that he should make as much as possible for himself and friends. Certainly it didn't lie in her mouth to accuse any man. There might be some comfort in the fact that the President hadn't finally made it a hard-and-fast ultimatum and there was fair prospect of averting war; but that was

a very cold, remote sort of comfort to her now.

If the crime could have succeeded, there would have been comfort in that, no matter what happened to her. But it could not succeed now. The way she had imagined it, Kersey would make some money out of that mysterious process of selling stocks. Then she would get hold of contrite, frightened young Bishoff and tell him that he must tell Jim the photographic process had been sold for so many thousand dollars—whatever number of thousand the stock-selling yielded—and that so the notes were all paid off and here was Jim's share of the remainder. She could tell Bishoff she had borrowed the money, and Bishoff would be ready enough to tell Jim a plausible cock-and-bull story about selling the process. Jim would be ready to believe it. It was easy enough to fool him in a matter of that kind.

Now that was impossible. Jim would know she had made money by betraying the state secret. He would sooner cut off his right hand, or both hands, than touch a penny of that money, and when he knew she had made money that way, no subterfuge would fool him.

The awful thing was the disgrace to Jim of having the "leak" traced to a member of his own household. No matter how he protested and explained, disgrace would attach to him. That was inevitable. She saw that, blindly meaning to help him, she had made herself the instrument of his ruin.

No idea of being forgiven entered her mind. There was not only the crime against the country; but all the ingenuity of Satan himself couldn't have contrived to put James Sansom in a position more odious and blasting to him than this position she had put him in. It was so far beyond the reach of forgiveness that the idea never occurred to her.

Fortunately, it was a busy day for Julia outside the house. There was an executive-committee meeting, then a luncheon, then a session of the Equal Suffrage League, which was sure to take all the afternoon. Ann was thankful that no eyes more critical than

those of the colored maid and the children would be upon her.

She did the marketing as usual—a tall, angular figure, rather shabbily dressed, with a homely face that lacked something of its customary high color, and soft brown eyes that seemed, if one looked closely, to be seeing a ghost. Returning from market, she went out of her way to visit the savings-bank where her personal hoard lay. All her life, with indomitable thrift, she had been putting small coins aside—for many years now, in a fat little blue-china vase which stood on the ancient bureau in her bedroom. When they made a handful, she deposited them in the savings-bank. But her passbook showed many entries on the other side—at Christmas, on the children's birthdays and for innumerable little exigencies that arose, as when Agnes broke her best-beloved doll.

She drew the balance to-day. It was eighty-two dollars and twenty-six cents. It had been something over a hundred and fifty dollars when she came to Washington to keep house for Jim twenty years before.

Also she bought a noon edition of an evening newspaper. It said the "leak" investigation was getting organized, hoped to begin taking testimony sometime during the afternoon; experts would soon be at work on the seized books. She had calculated, from the account in the morning newspapers and from what Jim said, that disclosures would not begin until the next day.

After midday luncheon, when the two young children were put to bed for their nap and Janet set out for school, Ann went up to her bedroom—next the maid's cubby—and began packing the most necessary articles in the old canvas "telescope" that she had brought to Washington. She had hardly enough to fill a trunk, and a trunk was out of the question, anyway.

She proposed, that evening, to let herself out of the house without a word or sound and take a night train for Chicago. She couldn't tell just why her mind had alighted on Chicago, but she remembered it indistinctly as a great, dim noisy place that seemed favorable for concealment. Her ideas

were quite clear and practical. She would make the journey in a day-coach, to save expense. Arriving, she would find a cheap hotel and then go to some employment agencies. She knew well enough that strong, capable, experienced women were always in demand for housework. She even had the assumed name picked out, and what she would say when references were asked for.

That was the only tolerable plan. She must get herself out of sight. It would be unbearable for Jim to see her, or for her to see Jim, after the disclosure came. Her mind would have scorned the notion of suicide. This was a sensible, Christian substitute for it.

AT ten minutes of six Ann was engaged in the following manner:

In the bedroom between hers and that occupied by Senator and Mrs. Sansom, three persons were seated. One of them, aged two and clad in a diaper and an undershirt, sat in a high-chair voraciously eating bread-and-milk as Ann fed it to him from a bowl in her lap. Opening his mouth wide for the food, like a young bird, he expressed content by slowly wriggling his pink toes, or now and then interrupted the meal to give more emphatic evidence of satisfaction by violently kicking up his bare, fat legs.

Another person, aged four and wearing a white cotton-flannel nightgown, sat in a child's chair industriously feeding herself cereal, poached egg and baked apple from the dishes on the tray of her chair—under Ann's watchful eye and with frequent admonitions not to try to get it all in her mouth at once, or with friendly advice to finish the egg before attacking the apple.

The meal ended. Two smeary faces and four sticky hands were carefully washed and wiped. Then Billy, as the junior, was incased in a nightgown and laid in his small white iron bed, a much-tousled and partly eaten toy horse clasped in his arms.

By immemorable custom and as a firmly established constitutional right, Agnes cuddled in Ann's lap a few minutes for an exchange of views on

current topics before being put to bed. Their conversation at this time was always of a highly confidential character. If it consisted only in Ann's reciting the threadbare adventures of the five little pigs, it took on the air of being a secret between them. To-night Ann hugged the small, soft, warm body more tightly than common, and the sweet, piping tones of the child's voice picked deep at the strings of her heart.

It was bedtime. Agnes stood up in Ann's lap, laughing into her face, spread her arms, threw herself against the older bosom and clasped her arms around the older neck. Ann stood up, carried her over and laid her in bed.

"Good night, dear," she said. "Good night, Billy. Be good children now, and go right to sleep." There was a little catch and crack in her voice at the end, but she smiled at them from the door, turned out the light and went into the hall, closing the door behind her.

A hot lump at the base of her throat stung and choked her. She thought: "It is the last time I shall ever see them." She felt blistering tears in her eyes and put forth her will. She had no business to cry. She had done the thing with her own hand. It was for her to take her medicine.

Three or four minutes later—so pale they must have noticed it if they hadn't been absorbed, but outwardly quite calm—she walked into the living-room, said, "Good evening, Jim," and sat down at the piano.

EXCEPT for one reproach, Ann had hardly thought of Thomas Kersey. Vagantly the idea of trying to get into communication with him had once or twice occurred to her, only to be promptly dismissed. His books and papers were seized. All would be disclosed. What was there to say? She scarcely bothered at all over his plight. He had taken the chance and must take the consequences. She rather supposed the consequences would not be particularly serious for him. Anyway, he had been overgreedy; that was just what had brought on the calamity. Far more intimate and searching aspects of the affair absorbed her. She hardly thought of the broker.

While they were waiting for dinner, a ring came at the front door. Ann answered it mechanically, for Eliza would expect her to. No one was there when she opened the door, but a large yellow envelope was sticking in the mail-box, and she perceived that one of those pests of the helpless householder, a distributor of advertising circulars, had been along.

The envelope, she saw, was blank except for the address to herself in typewriting. Standing in the hall, she mechanically drew forth the inclosure—a gaudy pamphlet announcing a moving-picture exhibition. Among other legends on the front cover were the words, printed in bold red ink: "*At eight P. M. sharp.*" Somebody had taken a pen, heavily underscored those words and then written after them: "*This evening, the 23rd.*"

She stared at that a moment and then, with a keen shock, recognized a personal message to herself which could have but one significance. She went back to the living-room, pamphlet in hand, with round eyes, agitated and wondering—and marveling at the guile of men.

She was surprised again, entering Thomas Kersey's parlor a minute after eight, when he bounced up to meet her, chuckling, holding out his hand and saying, "I was sure you'd catch on!" as though he were delighted with the situation.

She couldn't adjust herself to it—his sitting there talking to her in the best of spirits, chuckling fatly and clapping his plump hands on his knees. When he wound up his little statement by saying jovially, "And so I have a hundred thousand dollars for you," the words seemed to her to have no meaning.

All she could say at the moment—and it seemed to say itself—was: "You told."

"Told!" he repeated, astonished. Then, fervently, hurt at the accusation: "Oh, no! No! I told? Not a syllable, on my soul! Not a breath, on my honor!"

He said it so earnestly and was so hurt that her confusion increased. "But the newspapers!" she stammered.

Explaining the Villain

By Will Payne

"They say everybody was selling stocks."

"Oh, you mean told that an ultimatum was coming!" he exclaimed, much relieved. "Of course, I told some of my friends that. Why not? Wouldn't I have been a hog to keep it all to myself? Good friends of mine, you know, stanch fellows that have stood by me many a time. Of course, I wanted them to make something out of it too. Why not? That's why I have friends, and no man ever had better ones. By Jove—certainly, my friends are to make something when I can put it in their way." He affirmed it with feeling. "But as to where the news came from, not a syllable to a soul—not a breath, on my honor!"

THAT also he affirmed with feeling. She perceived it was true—perceived also that his honor was an affair she didn't quite understand.

"But they are investigating," she reminded him.

"Oh, that!" he replied, as one mentions a trifle, and stopped to chuckle. "Of course, they'll investigate. They're always doing that. They must have their circus, you know—chase one another's tails around in a ring for a while, yelp tremendously, kick up a great dust, get all over the front pages of the newspapers. That's their little way. But what they find I'll promise to put in my eye."

As though that had given him a clue, he regarded her a moment in friendly solicitude. "Has that made you nervous? Why, bless my soul, forget it! I don't claim to be a handsome bird, you know; but I'm an old bird and maybe have some wisdom. My friends are old birds too. What the investigators find I'll put in my eye. Remember that. I admit I sold stocks—because I thought they were too high. Anybody is privileged to do that. You don't imagine they're going to find anything on me? Just forget that.

"And keep this in mind: if the President sent an ultimatum, it was bound to become known, and when it was known, a lot of people were bound to sell stocks. What difference does it make

whether some people sold a little earlier than others? That wouldn't change the course of our foreign relations a hair's-breadth. Don't you worry. They'll find nothing on me, or on my friends. Just remember I've got a hundred thousand dollars for you, and when you look at Jim and his children, you'll know what you have done for them."

He leaned forward a little, hands on knees, and added earnestly: "Why, see here, Miss Ann; to my certain knowledge, at least two other houses had the tip early Thursday morning, and by noon half the Street had it. Don't you worry."

She still felt it rather confusing, as she trudged home. Thomas Kersey's genial view couldn't quite satisfy her. When she went upstairs, a mysterious urge sent her to the bedroom next her own. She softly pushed the door ajar and peered in. Light from the hall showed two little white beds, each with a curly head and rosy face locked in sleep.

"What innocence!" she thought with awe. "And in what a world! Babes growing up with rascals!"

It was there in the bedroom doorway that the significance of the interview with Kersey really came to her. After all, she had done it! She had saved the house!

She yearned toward the figures in the beds, feeling a surge of exquisitely tender and fiercely protective emotion that would have sent her to lay her old body in the middle of the road to be trampled into bits if that had been necessary in their behalf. She saw the little beds through a mist, and her heart swelled.

"I've helped Jim and them!" she thought. "What rascals we are, but how we love one another!"

She went on to her own small and shabby room. At a quarter to six she would get up and dress the children. A long succession of days spent in happy drudgery lay before her—like the long succession that lay behind her. But she felt indefinitely that it would be different. She would know she had saved the house.

The Hero of the Meet

by
William Almon Wolff



CRADDOCK stepped out daintily, trying the soft, springy track with his spikes, taking short, mincing steps that were like the affectations of a dancer—but that were like affectations in seeming only, as any runner could have told. As he emerged from the shelter of the gymnasium, the keen March wind struck him and he shivered for a moment as he stood in his sleeveless shirt, his short running-trunks, his bare legs. But it was not the cold that made him shiver; save for the wind, indeed, it was not so cold.

He stood there tall and lithe, his head thrown back, drinking in the sparkling air. And his eyes roamed over the great expanse of the athletic fields. Beyond there loomed up the great, gaunt football-stands inclosing the deserted gridiron. Between him and those stands almost every sort of sport was being practiced, assiduously, earnestly. He caught glimpses of runners like himself plodding around the track in the dull routine of preparation for distance runs or practicing the short, quick starts of the sprinters. Weight men were going through the motions of hurling shot and hammer, acquiring the dexterity that must reinforce their strength. Hurdlers, jumpers, pole-vaulters, all were at work. Three or four baseball-diamonds were occupied; in the distance he could see the flashing of lacrosse-sticks, and the soaring of the round football of the soccer-players.

Strange, incommunicable thrills ran through Craddock as he took it all in; he felt, curiously, like throwing up his

hands and shouting his joy. And yet he was no freshman, seeing this extraordinary panorama of activity for the first time. He was a senior; it was an old story to him. The Varsity letter was on the sweater that he trailed in his hand; he had the look of the veteran about him, of the man sure of himself and of what he can do.

He was on the old track, and after a minute he began to run, very slowly and, as it seemed, cautiously until he slipped under the stands and so to the new track within the football inclosure. This new track was to be used this spring for the first time; the great stadium, dedicated in November with a magnificent football-victory, had been chosen as the scene of the intercollegiate meet. And it was to the day of that meet, nearly three months distant, that Craddock was looking now as he tried out the new track; he was obsessed by the thought of helping to give the Varsity the first intercollegiate championship it had ever won.

HE stopped as he emerged from under the great concrete stands. And half a dozen men, seeing him, waved to him and called his name as they passed. From the far end of the track, where a broad jumper was practicing his take-off, a man in ordinary business clothes came swiftly to meet Craddock.

"Hello!" he said. "Ankle all right? Sure?"

He looked anxiously down at Craddock's right foot. About the ankle, tape was tightly wound. But Craddock laughed and put all his weight upon it for a moment.

"Right as a trivet—whatever that is!" he said. "I might as well have come out three weeks ago."

"No use taking chances," said the other. "Take it easy—awfully easy. Especially now. I've just heard—"

Craddock looked up, alert, interested. "Radway wont run in the half this year—that's definite. And that means you've got a cinch—if your ankle stands up. Mind you—I think you'd have beaten him, anyway. But as it is, we're sure of five points there. And that just about cinches the meet. You and Hallett and Norton ought to run one-two-three."

"Good enough!" said Craddock enthusiastically. "Say, Tommy—I hope you're right! I'd like to come home first, once, in an intercollegiate championship! It's sort of funny, when you think it over: in three years a second's the best I've been able to pull down."

"You should worry," said the coach with a short laugh. "I guess this college has some idea of just how much you're worth to it! You picked up the points that brought us in second last spring—and it was the first time we'd ever been close to the leaders in the intercollegiates. And you got the captaincy—"

"Oh, I'm not kicking!" said Craddock. "It's just—oh, well, you know how it is, Tommy! I'd like to wind up in a blaze of glory, and all that sort of thing! It's a kid's way of thinking about it, of course—"

"Well, don't you worry about it this year," said the coach with a grin. "Radway's being out doesn't make any real difference—except that it makes us sure of the first three places, instead of three out of four. Rad could beat Norton, and he's such a cagy runner that he might slip in ahead of Hallett. So we'll get ten points in the half instead of eight or nine—and if that doesn't make us sure of the meet, I'll quit coaching and take to truck-driving."

Craddock couldn't help liking that

sort of talk. He knew that Tommy Hart meant exactly what he said—that Tommy never talked just for the sake of talking. And Tommy knew, moreover; his forecast of the intercollegiate meet every year was so accurate that not one time in four did the results change his prediction in any important particular.

"Take it once around—easy," said Hart. "Then get your shower and a rub and come back. There's a lot of things I want to talk over with you."

SO Craddock started, slipping around the soft track, running easily, with long, free steps. He could feel his long idle muscles protesting; he could foresee exactly the comfortable tiredness that he would know that night. And as he looked up, he visualized this field as it would look on that great day that was coming at the end of May. Athletes from colleges as far apart as Maine and California would be here; in the great gray stands that yawned so empty now there would be cheering crowds, coloring the stands vividly. He closed his eyes as he jogged along; unconsciously, for a moment, he quickened his pace. He was rehearsing his final sprint in the race that would be the climax of his four years in college; he could almost hear the long cheer that would roll across the field, with his name barked out three times at the end.

And then he slowed down again, remembering. It was good enough, all of it. It would be worth all the dull labor, the rigorous training, the abstention from all the pleasant activities of this last term. For on that day, in the brief moments of his last race, he would reap the harvest he had sown in these three years that lay behind him. What Tommy Hart had said was true enough. He had done his part. The points he had picked up for finishing second and third and fourth in race after race had played their parts in the totals. And yet he longed for the dramatic triumph of a championship; he wanted to taste the glory that went with absolute victory.

He might have come near to it in November, when for the first time he

had started with the Varsity in the big game. He could look out and identify almost the very spot where he had stood, crouched and tense, awaiting the kick-off. He could remember the rush down the field under the soaring ball, the way he had fought his way through the cloud of blue-clad players who guarded the man who had caught the ball, his lunge through the air as he reached his opponent. He had brought down his man—but he hadn't been able to get up; they had carried him from the field with the broken ankle that had barred him from all the indoor meets in which the track-team, his team, had won all sorts of laurels for itself. But it didn't matter now; his ankle had defeated the gloomy prophecies of the doctors; it had healed well enough for him to run. He didn't mean to let anyone know of the occasional almost unbearable twinges of pain that came to him, of his own conviction that there was something wrong with the involved and delicate structure of bone and sinew and tendon upon which so much depended. It would do its work; he would see to that. And later, after the meet, he would submit, if necessary, to another X-ray picture; he didn't much care what they did to him then.

THE rubber was anxious, almost tender, as he worked over Craddock, lying stretched out in the gymnasium after his bath. Every muscle was kneaded and rubbed, pounded and pulled; under the man's deft handling, thrills of exquisite pain shot through Craddock, in the end to give way to a pervading sensation of the most luxurious comfort. He rose at last, stretching his naked body, with the muscles rippling and flowing under his glowing skin.

"That's the stuff!" he said, grinning. "Gosh—I could fight my weight in wildcats, the way I feel now!"

He was grinning still when, in his ordinary garb of corduroy trousers, flannel shirt and sweater, he made his way back to the track. The shadows were longer now; the sun was dipping down behind the western wall of the stadium. But Tommy Hart was still keeping his squad at work. He seemed

to be gifted with the ability to be in two or three places at once, and the way he turned upon a luckless hurdler who was reverting to some slipshod fashion of taking his flights proved beyond all reasonable doubt that he had eyes in the back of his head.

"All right?" asked Hart. "Good! Want to go over and watch Blaine and Crewe putting the shot? They can get the distance, but they foul too much. They both seem to lose a lot of distance when they stay in the circle. And we've got to get that big sophomore Lundberg used to the double turn—if we do, he ought to pick up a point or so with the hammer. He's got the beef and the strength, but I'm afraid he's dead from the neck up."

So Craddock went over to the circle where two eager but clumsy shot-putters were working with the sixteen-pound ball and instructed them patiently in the theory of an event that, seen from the stands, appears to be rudimentary.

Here was the very essence of the work of making a track-team. Before Hart and Craddock, and such volunteer helpers as they might command, there stretched many days of just such patient labor. About the making of a track and field team there is none of the spectacular quality that is inherent in the molding of a football eleven. The work is done soberly, silently, without observation. No cheering crowds of undergraduates come to practice songs and yells and cheer the men on. The papers print no columns of analysis of the work. Graduates do not flock back, eager to help. The work devolves upon two or three men. But it is real work, none the less, and it demands real knowledge.

CRADDOCK was obsessed by his team. He gave it every minute that his college work did not demand. He applied the spur to this man; to another he gave praise and encouragement, at the crucial moment. And he worked himself, worked hard and constantly.

There were times when, for a week at a stretch, it seemed to Craddock that he was telling the truth about his

ankle, that it really was, as he had assured Hart, absolutely sound. But then would come a sudden twinge, a racking, shooting pain, that warned him.

There were long nights when he lay sleepless, worrying. Was he justified, after all, in taking the chance? Suppose something happened in the race? Suppose he collapsed and proved unable to finish? The points he ought to win might well mean the difference between victory and defeat; perhaps he ought to warn Hart and help in the work of finding some one to take his place. But always, when the moment of confession came, he resolved to see it through. He would get through somehow; no matter what the effort cost him, he would win that half-mile.

It wasn't altogether as a matter of sentiment that he wanted so earnestly to win, either.

Here was the thing that was in Craddock's mind: June, and Commencement, loomed before him. He had no job, no settled plan for the career that must begin as soon as he put college behind him. Craddock's people weren't rich; even though he had done a good deal, during the summers, and with odd jobs during the college year, toward paying his own expenses, it had taken a pretty hard pull for his father to get him through college. He didn't live in one of the expensive dormitories; he roomed with Frank Blayden, of his own class, in an old, tumbledown house that was scarcely on the campus at all. And he and Blayden had talked a good deal, of late, of what lay ahead of them.

"I'm not kicking, Buck," Blayden said one night. "It's reasonable enough. But I'm one of the submerged tenth. I don't stand out. People aren't hanging around waiting to offer me good jobs because I've made a name in college that carries some advertising value."

"Meaning Billy Cathcart?" Craddock asked.

"He'll do for an example," said Blayden. "Gosh—I don't feel sore, or anything like that. Bill's a good old scout, and I'm glad he's landed well.

He'll settle down, too, once he gets to work, and make good. But—suppose he hadn't been the star back on the football-team last fall. Suppose he'd never kicked that field goal or broken away for that long run in November. Can you see old Jasper coming up here and offering him a year's contract at a fancy salary in his brokerage business? Not in a million years!"

"Yep!" Craddock nodded, thoughtfully. "Still—it's fair enough. I guess a lot of people will come into Jasper's office just to get a chance to talk to old Bill. They won't care whether he knows the difference between Steel common and aluminum kitchen-ware!"

"It's fair enough—you're right, there," said Blayden. "But—oh, well! I happen to have specialized in ec' and corporation-finance and the theory of stock-exchange dealings! And I suppose I'll be lucky if some punk agency digs me up a job teaching in a high school somewhere and takes a mortgage on my pay for a year or so to get hunk!"

"That part of it's tough luck," Craddock decided. "You worked a darned sight harder for the team than old Bill ever had to."

"Three years on the scrub," said Blayden without bitterness. "I did my bit. Oh, well—it'll all come out in the wash! And you'll get your chance, anyhow, Buck. I was talking to Tommy Hart, and he says there isn't a chance for you to lose the half in the intercollegiate. You'll wind up in a blaze of glory—I'll have to herd your prospective employers into line afterward!"

"Nothing like that," said Craddock with a grin. "Still, I know darned well it'll make a big difference if I do win that race. The only thing I've really got in sight now is a job in my home town—and it doesn't look awfully good. Ten a week to start. Seems as if you ought to be able to get something better than that after four years here."

"You will," said Blayden. He looked at their clock. "Here—bedtime, old horse! Let's have a look at that ankle. Get ready and I'll turn masseur."

And in a few minutes Blayden was busy with his nightly rite. Every night

he went at that suspected ankle of Craddock's, rubbing, kneading, pounding, trying to add to its strength. Neither of them talked much about this; but occasionally, when Craddock knew that his roommate was staying away from some function, he ventured a protest, which was always curtly and gruffly silenced.

IN the dual meets Craddock took things very easy. He didn't run at all, but his confidence in the team was fully justified. Hallett made good; won both his races in impressive fashion. But Craddock, practicing daily with the youngster, trying him out, knew that he was still the boy's master.

"I'm glad I won't have to run you next year," he said frankly. "You're getting better all the time. But I guess I'll just about slip one over on you this time."

"Gee—I couldn't beat you in a thousand years!" said the youngster, wide-eyed.

"Your feeling that way is one reason why you can't," said Craddock cheerfully. "So I'm glad you think so—even if you're wrong, which you are. Still—you've got all the time there is. You needn't feel bad about letting me have this year's race."

Track-meets, even big ones, don't command the same sort of enthusiastic interest and excitement, in advance, that football-games do, or baseball series, or boat-races. Sometimes, when victory or defeat hangs upon a single event, a good deal of excitement does develop; men drop whatever they happen to be doing when they hear how things are going, and come flocking to the field to be in at the finish. But an intercollegiate meet does count heavily, of course; in this instance the novelty of holding it helped to stir the college, and by the time the day came for the trials, which were held on Friday, little else was talked of about the campus.

Intercollegiate fields have become unwieldy in these latter years; it takes two days, now, to run off the meet. On Friday there are elimination-contests in a good many of the events; only the cream of the competitors survive for

the real doings on Saturday, when the big crowd is out. Craddock loafed through his heat in the half-mile on Friday; he was, by good fortune, drawn in a different heat from Hallett and Norton, and had to do no running worthy of the name to finish second and so qualify handily for the final. Hallett was the sensation of the day; he equaled the intercollegiate record in winning his heat and was hailed as the athletic marvel of the year, which happened to be a rather poor one, in which the standing records seemed unlikely to be threatened very seriously. But Hart, going over the day's performances with Craddock, only grinned.

"You've seen him *beat* the record—running against time," said Hart. "He can't do it with you in the race. But he's a sweet runner. He'll make you step to-morrow, at that. Well—it all worked out pretty nicely. I thought Baker would qualify in the pole-vault—and I didn't think Tremper would. Yale may get one point more than I expected. Even so, though, we're safe—unless some one falls down to-morrow."

"It looks good, all right," said Craddock with deep content. "But I'll be glad when it's all over!"

Hart looked at him appraisingly. "Going to sleep all right to-night?" he asked. "Take a hot bath, last thing before you turn in. And stay up half an hour later than usual. Don't worry, anyhow—take it from me that it looks fine and dandy! You know—winning this championship means something to me too."

CRADDOCK did sleep—slept better than he had expected to, as a matter of fact. It wasn't noisy in the neighborhood of his rooms, as it would have been in a more aristocratic quarter; the graduates who had come back for the meet were making night hideous in the newer buildings. Craddock and Hart had ordered a good many of the team out of their rooms for the night, just for that reason, and had seen to it that they were quartered in spots where the obstacles to a sound sleep would be fewer.

But it was early when he awoke,

and he crossed the room to the window in one jump. Birds were singing in the trees outside; but the sun was shining through a light mist, and the prospect was all for the fair, hot day for which Craddock had prayed—the sort of day that meant a hard, dry track, lightning fast. Probably there would be little or no wind—so much the better!

Blayden nursed him through the morning, stayed close beside him as he went about, watched him sharply as he ate his breakfast and, hours later, the light lunch that was allowed. And then Blayden's part was done.

"I'll probably be hoarse to-night," he said with a grin as they started. "I expect to yell my head off, like some fool freshman."

Craddock faced the worst part of the day after he had donned his running togs and gone out, wrapped in a bathrobe, to watch the early contests. The half would be run late; he had to wait about for his time to come, and he was nervous—more nervous than he had been on the day of a meet since his prep-school days. There was a good deal for him to do; the responsibility for the team was his, after all. And so he was by Hart's side when an accident, unforeseen, unforeseeable, wrecked every one of Hart's nice calculations that had made victory seem so certain.

DANIELL, counted on to win the pole-vault, was vaulting beautifully. The bar was at eleven feet, Daniell, rising, lightly, gracefully, pushed his pole away and soared over. But he made some tiny miscalculation; some reflex action went wrong. He dropped into the pit of soft earth and lay there. And Hart and Craddock, reaching him together, turned sick as they saw the jagged, protruding bone that told the story of disaster. His leg was broken.

"Stay here," said Hart grimly. "I'll see to him and get back as soon as I can."

It wasn't heartlessness that made Craddock think, as he watched Daniell being borne away, more of the blow to the team's chances than of Daniell's suffering; that had been Daniell's

thought too. Craddock was trying, desperately, to figure out just what this blow meant—to see what chance there might be, now, to beat Yale, after all. For this made all the difference. Not only would the Varsity lose five points; Yale was almost certain to get them. And Craddock was trying to remember Hart's elaborate table. He hadn't quite succeeded when the coach came back.

"It's not as bad as it looked," Hart said. "It's a simple fracture—Doc Hazzard says it'll heal nicely. But—good night, meet!"

"I was afraid of that!" said Craddock wretchedly. "We need one more point than we can get?"

"If Yale gets all I've given them," said Hart. "We can get ten in the half—first, second, third. But it won't be enough."

"Let's see your dope-sheet," said Craddock.

He took the paper Hart handed him and stared at it. And suddenly his face brightened.

"Here!" he cried. "I'm entered in the mile?"

"Yes—but you can't run that and the half too!" said Hart. "They're too close together—"

"I know—but listen! Suppose we take first and second in the half—that's eight points. And then—if I can get second in the mile, it ought to crowd Bliss out—you've got him down for fourth! Don't you see? We'd get one more point—and Yale one less! It would just win for us—"

Hart stared at him.

"It's a chance!" he said. "You haven't run the mile much this year—but still they're a scrub lot. And Hallett and Norton can run one-two in the half—"

"Even if they don't we're licked sure, the other way! This is the only chance we've got. Oh, we've got to take it!"

"But you're giving up a sure first place to try for a second."

"What do I matter? It's the team that counts."

Hart's hand fell upon his shoulder suddenly.

"Right!" he said. "I—oh, it's tough,

Buck—that's what it is—tough. But you're right. I'll fix it for you to run and announce that you're withdrawing from the half. One good thing: that mile's due to start soon, you won't be able to hang around thinking about it."

BUT there was time enough for thought. Craddock worried—worried from the moment that he took his decision. Could he do it? He knew he had no chance to win. Cornell had the mile cinched, with Truatt. But could he get second? He had run the distance often enough—but not this year. It was, indeed, precisely because team policy had always required him to shift about so, had prevented him from specializing in one event, that he had come to his last intercollegiate without having won a first place.

It seemed to Craddock, as he thought the thing out coolly, dispassionately, that he had just about an even chance. He needn't worry about Truatt; first place could be conceded to the Cornell star at once. And Truatt would set the pace. He was out for a record, and would have to do that. For the others—would he have the stamina, after training all spring for the shorter race? He'd have to last—that was all. And then his ankle!

For the mile there had been no qualifying heats. There was a big field, but it would scatter quickly, dividing into sheep and goats. Craddock drew a good position, a position where he could watch Langdon of Harvard, Bliss of Yale, Arnold of Michigan, Horner of Lafayette, Greene of Dartmouth—the men who were, he knew, dangerous. Langdon, Arnold and Bliss had been picked by Hart to finish in that order behind Truatt; everything depended on Craddock's ability to finish ahead of Langdon and Arnold. If he did that, even if Bliss slipped into fourth place, everything would be all right. But the odds were great; these men were all milers, trained to the distance, primed for this race. He was conceding a tremendous handicap.

"**A**RE you ready? Get set!" The pistol cracked, and he broke away, slowly, caught in the fight for

the pole. The field strung out; from the start Truatt took the lead. There was a wild scramble behind him, but in the first quarter the race took its form. Craddock clung to Langdon; he knew that Bliss and Arnold were right at his heels. And he didn't worry at all about the group of outsiders who were immediately behind Truatt, that racing-machine. They would come back, fast enough, when the time came to challenge them. His best hope was that Langdon would choose to make the first two quarters slow. He made up his mind to one thing: if Langdon, inspired by some desperate hope of beating Truatt, tried to hold the Cornellian's pace, he would not be beguiled into following him.

It seemed, at first, that Langdon meant to take things easy. But some imp of perversity got into him; in the second quarter he cut loose and set sail in pursuit of Truatt. Craddock shook his head doggedly.

"He can't hold Truatt's pace," he thought. "Let him go! If I can't catch him later, when he's tired, I can't—that's all!"

And so, at the unfamiliar distance, he ran his own race, regardless of any other man who was in it. Arnold and Bliss stayed with him; he let Arnold pass him, but the Westerner was not to be led into the trap that had yawned too invitingly for Langdon. Once he was ahead of Craddock, he jogged along.

The sprinters came back quickly in the third quarter. It wasn't long before only Truatt and Langdon were ahead of Arnold. And Craddock, beginning to tire, stayed at Arnold's shoulder. His ankle was beginning to protest; his whole system, indeed, was rebelling against the extra draft he had begun to make upon it. Exquisite, stabbing pains ran up his leg, but he fought the knowledge of them—refused to admit that he was aware of them.

COMING into the fourth quarter, Truatt was a hundred yards ahead and running beautifully. He had shaken Langdon off, after ignoring the Harvard man's challenge contemptuously, until he was ready to increase

The Hero of the Meet

By William Almon Wolff

his pace, and now Langdon was showing signs of distress. Still Arnold waited; it was not until he was rounding the turn from the back-stretch that he changed from the clocklike precision of the stride he had maintained since the start.

Now he quickened his pace; he was not beginning his sprint, but even the slight extra speed racked Craddock's weary body and made him bite his lips at the sudden renewal of the pain in his ankle. But he hung grimly to Arnold's shoulder, and in a moment, as they turned into the stretch, he had the satisfaction of seeing how fast Langdon was dropping back toward them.

He heard a sort of grunt from Arnold. Then, without any conscious volition, he knew that he was beginning his sprint. His eyes grew queer; he couldn't see much ahead of him. It seemed dark; bright spots of light danced up and down. He could feel the pounding of his heart, the terrific expansion and contraction of his lungs. But he kept on; swifter and swifter grew the movements of his legs. He heard a great roar of cheering ahead; long afterward he knew that that must have been at the moment that Truatt broke the tape, winner of the race.

And then suddenly he was no longer conscious of the two figures just in front of him. He seemed to be running blindly, mechanically, in an empty world, and some other man's ankle was hurting agonizingly. He threw up his hands—then he went down and collapsed utterly on the track.

HE came to—to feel water in his face and to see the coach grinning down at him.

"Great work—great work!" said Hart. "You were second. Arnold nosed Langdon out at the finish! You're just in time for the half! Here—sit up!"

Craddock tried to stand up, and his ankle crumpled under him. But he only grinned. It didn't matter—now. It had lasted long enough. And now he grew aware of steady, rhythmic

cheering—the Varsity yell, often repeated, first for Hallett, then for Norton.

"The cheer-leaders got the dope," said Hart. "They know we've got to have first and second in the half to win the meet—and they don't know—yet—that we had to have your points in the mile! I suppose there'll be talk of a garrison finish—ha!—they're off!"

Craddock sat on his campstool, clutching Hart's arm. But even in the first quarter he sat back content. Hallett was there! In less than two minutes it was all over. Hallett had won; Norton, fifteen yards behind, was second—and the meet was won!

Down from the stands poured wild-eyed rooters, clamoring for Hallett—cheering him, roaring out his name. Wasn't he the hero of the meet? Hadn't he, at the eleventh hour, turned defeat into victory?

Later, hobbling along with the help of a cane, Craddock felt the mighty hand of Bill Cathcart descend upon his back.

"Yea, Buck!" said Cathcart. "Some little old track-team, Buck! Intercollegiate champions! Say, Buck—I want you to meet my future boss—Jasper, '87."

Jasper held out his hand.

"Glad to meet you, Craddock," he said. "Great team! Too bad you couldn't have won a first place yourself."

For just a minute Craddock looked at him blankly. Then the memory of all he had planned and dreamed about this day came over him, and he grinned.

"We couldn't all win firsts, sir," he said. "You saw young Hallett, didn't you?"

"You bet I did!" Jasper exploded enthusiastically. "By Jove—there's the sort of man I'm proud to see here when I come back! I'm going to keep an eye on him. Sophomore, isn't he? Well—if he wants a job when he's through, I guess he'll hear where to look for it!"

Craddock grinned again as he turned away. Somehow that shoddy ten-dollar-a-week job that was waiting for him back home didn't look so bad!

The New Stories of Tarzan

The
Nightmare
By Edgar
Rice
Burroughs

THE blacks of the village of Mbongi the chief were feasting, while above them in a large tree sat Tarzan of the Apes—grim, terrible, empty and envious. Hunting had proved poor that day, for there are lean days as well as fat for even the greatest of the jungle hunters. Frequently Tarzan went empty for more than a full sun, and he had passed through entire moons during which he had been but barely able to stave off starvation; but such times were infrequent.

There had once been a period of sickness among the grass-eaters which had left the plains almost bare of game for several years; and once there had been another period when the great cats had increased so rapidly and so overrun the country that their prey, which was also Tarzan's, had been frightened off for a considerable time.

But for the most part Tarzan had fed well always. To-day, though, he had gone empty, one misfortune following another as rapidly as he raised new quarry, so that now, as he sat perched in the tree above the feasting blacks, he experienced all the pangs of famine, and his hatred for his lifelong enemies waxed strong in his breast. It was tantalizing, indeed, to sit there hungry while these *gomangani* filled themselves so full of food that their stomachs seemed almost upon the point of bursting—and with elephant-steaks at that!

It was true that Tarzan and Tantor were the best of friends, and that Tar-

zan never yet had tasted of the flesh of the elephant; but the *gomangani* evidently had slain one, and as they were eating of the flesh of their kill, Tarzan was assailed by no doubts as to the ethics of his doing likewise, should he have the opportunity. Had he known that the elephant had died of

sickness several days before the blacks discovered the carcass, he might not have been so keen to partake of the feast, for Tarzan of the Apes was no carrion-eater. Hunger, however, may blunt the most epicurean taste, and Tarzan was not exactly an epicure.

What he was at this moment was a very hungry wild beast whom caution was holding in leash, for the great cooking-pot in the center of the village was surrounded by black warriors through whom not even Tarzan of the Apes might hope to pass unharmed. It would be necessary, therefore, for the watcher to remain there hungry until the blacks had gorged themselves to stupor, and then, if they had left any scraps, to make the best meal he could from their leavings; but to the impatient Tarzan it seemed the greedy *gomangani* would rather burst than leave the feast before the last morsel had been devoured. For a time they broke the monotony of eating by executing portions of a hunting-dance, a maneuver which sufficiently stimulated digestion to permit them to

fall to once more with renewed vigor; but with the consumption of appalling quantities of elephant-meat and native beer they presently became too logy for physical exertion of any sort, some reaching a stage where they no longer could rise from the ground, but lay conveniently close to the great cooking-pot, stuffing themselves into unconsciousness.

IT was well past midnight before Tarzan could even commence to see the end of the orgy. The blacks were now falling asleep rapidly, but a few still persisted. From their condition Tarzan had no doubt that he could easily enter the village and snatch a handful of meat from before their noses. But a handful was not what he wanted; nothing less than a stomachful would allay the gnawing craving of that great emptiness. He must therefore have ample time to forage in peace.

At last but a single warrior remained true to his ideals—an old fellow whose wrinkled belly was now as smooth and as tight as the head of a drum. With evidences of great discomfort and even pain he would crawl toward the pot and drag himself slowly to his knees, from which position he could reach into the receptacle and seize a piece of meat. Then he would roll over on his back with a loud groan and lie there while he slowly forced the food between his teeth and down into his gorged stomach.

It was evident to Tarzan that the old fellow would eat until he died or until there was no more meat. The ape-man shook his head in disgust. What foul creatures were these *gomangani*! Yet of all the junglefolk they alone resembled Tarzan closely in form. Tarzan was a man; and they too must be some manner of men—just as the little monkeys and the great apes and Bolgani the gorilla were quite evidently of one great family, though differing in size and appearance and customs. Tarzan was ashamed, for of all beasts of the jungle, then, man was the most disgusting—man and Dango the hyena. Only man and Dango ate until they swelled up like dead rats. Tarzan had seen Dango eat his way into the carcass

of a dead elephant, and then continue to eat so much that he had been unable to get out of the hole through which he had entered. Now he could readily believe that man, given the opportunity, would do the same. Man, too, was the most unlovely of creatures—with his skinny legs and his big stomach, his filed teeth and his thick, red lips. Man was disgusting. Tarzan's gaze was riveted upon the hideous old warrior wallowing in filth beneath him.

There! The thing was struggling to its knees to reach for another morsel of flesh. It groaned aloud in pain, and yet it persisted in eating, eating, ever eating. Tarzan could endure it no longer—neither his hunger nor his disgust. Silently he slipped to the ground, with the bole of the great tree between himself and the feaster.

The man was still kneeling, bent almost double in agony, before the cooking-pot. His back was toward the ape-man. Swiftly and noiselessly Tarzan approached him. There was no sound as steel fingers closed about the black throat. The struggle was short, for the man was old and already half stupefied from the effects of the gorging and the beer.

Tarzan dropped the inert mass and scooped several large pieces of meat from the cooking-pot—enough to satisfy even his great hunger; then he raised the body of the feaster and shoved it into the vessel. When the other blacks awoke, they would have something to think about! Tarzan grinned. As he turned toward the tree with his meat, he picked up a vessel containing beer and raised it to his lips, but at the first taste he spat the stuff from his mouth and tossed the primitive tankard aside. He was quite sure that even Dango would draw the line at such filthy-tasting drink as that, and his contempt for man increased with the conviction.

TARZAN swung off into the jungle some half-mile or so before he paused to partake of his stolen food. He noticed that it gave forth a strange and unpleasant odor, but assumed that this was due to the fact that it had stood in a vessel of water above a fire. Tarzan was, of course, unaccustomed to

cooked food. He did not like it; but he was very hungry and had eaten a considerable portion of his haul before it was really borne in upon him that the stuff was nauseating. It required far less than he had imagined, to satisfy his appetite.

Throwing the rest to the ground, he curled up in a convenient crotch and sought slumber. But slumber seemed difficult to woo; ordinarily Tarzan of the Apes was asleep as quickly as a dog after it curls itself upon a hearthrug before a roaring blaze; but to-night he squirmed and twisted, for at the pit of his stomach was a peculiar feeling that resembled nothing more closely than an attempt upon the part of the fragments of elephant-meat reposing there to come out into the night and search for their elephant. But Tarzan was adamant; he gritted his teeth and held them back. He was not to be robbed of his meal after waiting so long to obtain it.

He had succeeded in dozing when the roaring of a lion awoke him. He sat up to discover that it was broad daylight. Tarzan rubbed his eyes. Could it be that he had really slept? He did not feel particularly refreshed, as he should have after a good sleep. A noise attracted his attention, and he looked down to see a lion standing at the foot of the tree gazing hungrily at him. Tarzan made a face at the king of beasts; whereat Numa, greatly to the ape-man's surprise, started to climb up into the branches toward him. Now, never before had Tarzan seen a lion climb a tree; yet for some unaccountable reason he was not greatly surprised that this particular lion should do so.

As the lion climbed slowly toward him, Tarzan sought higher branches; but to his chagrin he discovered that it was with the utmost difficulty that he could climb at all. Again and again he slipped back, losing all that he had gained, while the lion kept steadily at his climbing, coming ever closer and closer to the ape-man. Tarzan could see the hungry light in the yellow-green eyes. He could see the slaver on the drooping jowls, and the great fangs agape to seize and destroy him.

Clawing desperately, the ape-man at last succeeded in gaining a little upon

his pursuer. He reached the more slender branches far aloft where he well knew no lion could follow; yet on and on came devil-faced Numa. It was incredible; but it was true. Yet what most amazed Tarzan was that though he realized the incredibility of it all, he at the same time took it all as a matter of course—first that a lion should climb at all, and second that he should enter the upper terraces where even Sheeta the panther dared not go.

To the very top of the tall tree the ape-man clawed his awkward way, and after him came Numa the lion, moaning dismally. At last Tarzan stood balanced upon the very utmost pinnacle of a swaying branch, high above the forest. He could go no farther. Below him the lion came steadily upward, and Tarzan of the Apes realized that at last the end had come. He could not do battle upon a tiny branch with Numa the lion, especially with such a Numa, to which swaying branches two hundred feet above the ground provided as substantial footing as the ground itself.

NEARER and nearer came the lion. Another moment, and he could reach up with one great paw and drag the ape-man downward to those awful jaws. A whirring noise above his head caused Tarzan to glance apprehensively upward. A great bird was circling close above him. He had never seen so large a bird in all his life; yet he recognized it immediately, for had he not seen it hundreds of times in one of the books in the little cabin by the landlocked bay—the moss-grown cabin that with its contents was the sole heritage left by his dead and unknown father to the young Lord Greystoke?

In the picture-book the great bird was shown flying far above the ground with a small child in its talons, while beneath, a distracted mother stood with uplifted hands. The lion was already reaching forth a taloned paw to seize Tarzan when the bird swooped and buried no less formidable talons in Tarzan's back. The pain was numbing; but it was with a sense of relief that the ape-man felt himself snatched from the clutches of Numa.

With a great whirring of wings, the

bird rose rapidly until the forest lay far below. It made Tarzan sick and dizzy to look down from so great a height, and so he closed his eyes tight and held his breath. Higher and higher climbed the huge bird. Tarzan opened his eyes. The jungle was so far away that he could see only a dim, green blur below him; but just above and quite close was the sun. Tarzan reached out his hands and warmed them, for they were very cold. Then a sudden madness seized him. Where was the bird taking him? Was he to submit thus passively to a feathered creature however enormous? Was he, Tarzan of the Apes, mighty fighter, to die without striking a blow in his own defense? Never!

He snatched the hunting-blade from his gee-string and thrusting upward, drove it once, twice, thrice, into the breast above him. The mighty wings fluttered a few more times, spasmodically; the talons relaxed their hold—and Tarzan of the Apes fell hurtling downward toward the distant jungle.

It seemed to the ape-man that he fell for many minutes before he crashed through the leafy verdure of the tree-tops. The smaller branches broke his fall so that he came to rest for an instant upon the very branch upon which he had sought slumber the previous night. For an instant he toppled there in a frantic attempt to regain his equilibrium; at last he rolled off, and yet, clutching wildly, he succeeded in grasping the branch and hanging on.

Once more he opened his eyes, which he had closed during the fall. Again it was night. With all his old agility he clambered back to the crotch from which he had toppled. Below him a lion roared, and looking downward, Tarzan could see the yellow-green eyes shining in the moonlight as they bored hungrily upward through the darkness of the jungle night toward him.

The ape-man gasped for breath. Cold sweat stood out from every pore; there was a great sickness at the pit of Tarzan's stomach. Tarzan of the Apes had dreamed his first dream.

FOR a long time Tarzan sat watching for Numa to climb into the tree after him, and listening for the sound of

the great wings from above, for to Tarzan of the Apes his dream was a reality.

He could not believe what he had seen; and yet, having seen even these incredible things, he could not disbelieve the evidence of his own perceptions. Never in all his life had Tarzan's senses deceived him badly; and so, naturally, he had great faith in them. Each perception which had ever been transmitted to Tarzan's brain had been, with varying accuracy, a true perception. He could not conceive of the possibility of having apparently passed through such a weird adventure in which there was no grain of truth. That a stomach disordered by decayed elephant-flesh, a lion roaring in the jungle, a picture-book and sleep could have so truly portrayed all the clear-cut details of what he had seemingly experienced was quite beyond his knowledge; yet he knew that Numa could not climb a tree; he knew that there existed in the jungle no such bird as he had seen; and he knew, too, that he could not have fallen a tiny fraction of the distance he had hurtled downward, and lived.

To say the least, he was a very puzzled Tarzan as he tried to compose himself once more for slumber—a very puzzled and a very nauseated Tarzan.

As he thought deeply upon the strange occurrences of the night, he witnessed another remarkable happening. It was indeed quite preposterous; yet he saw it all with his own eyes: it was nothing less than Histah the snake wreathing his sinuous and slimy way up the bole of the tree below him—Histah, with the head of the old man Tarzan had shoved into the cooking-pot, the head and the round, tight, black, distended stomach. As the old man's frightful face, with upturned eyes, set and glassy, came close to Tarzan, the jaws opened to seize him. The ape-man struck furiously at the hideous face, and as he struck, the apparition disappeared.

Tarzan sat straight up upon his branch, trembling in every limb, wide-eyed and panting. He looked all around him with his keen, jungle-trained eyes, but he saw naught of the old man with the body of Histah the snake; but on his naked thigh the ape-man saw a caterpillar, dropped from a branch above

him. With a grimace he flicked it off into the darkness beneath.

SO the night wore on, dream following dream, nightmare following nightmare, until the distracted ape-man started like a frightened deer at the rustling of the wind in the trees about him, or leaped to his feet as the uncanny laugh of a hyena burst suddenly upon a momentary jungle silence. But at last the tardy morning broke, and a sick and feverish Tarzan wound sluggishly through the dank and gloomy mazes of the forest in search of water. His whole body seemed on fire; a great sickness surged upward to his throat. He saw a tangle of almost impenetrable thicket, and like the wild beast he was, he crawled into it to die alone and unseen, safe from the attacks of predatory *carnivora*.

But Tarzan did not die. For a long time he wanted to; but presently nature and an outraged stomach relieved themselves in their own therapeutic manner, the ape-man broke into a violent perspiration and then fell into a normal and untroubled sleep which persisted well into the afternoon. When he awoke, he found himself weak but no longer sick.

Once more he sought water, and after drinking deeply he took his way slowly toward the cabin by the sea. In times of loneliness and trouble it had long been his custom to seek there the quiet and restfulness which he could find nowhere else.

As he approached the cabin and raised the crude latch which his father had fashioned so many years before, two small, bloodshot eyes watched him from the concealing foliage of the jungle close by. From beneath shaggy, beetle-browed brows they glared maliciously upon him, maliciously and with a keen curiosity; then Tarzan entered the cabin and closed the door after him.

Here, with all the world shut out from him, Tarzan could dream without fear of interruption. He could curl up and look at the pictures in the strange things which were books; he could puzzle out the printed word he had learned to read without knowledge of the spoken language it represented; he could live in a wonderful world of which he had no

knowledge beyond the covers of his beloved books.

To-day Tarzan turned to the picture of the huge bird which bore off the little *Tarmangani* in its talons. Tarzan puckered his brows as he examined the colored print. Yes, this was the very bird that had carried him off the day before, for to Tarzan the dream had been so great a reality that he still thought another day and a night had passed since he had lain down in the tree to sleep.

But the more he thought upon the matter, the less positive he was as to the verity of the seeming adventures through which he had passed; yet where the real had ceased and the unreal commenced he was hard put to it to determine. Had he really then been to the village of the blacks at all? Had he killed the old *gomangani*? had he eaten of the elephant meat? had he been sick? Tarzan scratched his tousled black head and wondered. It was all very strange; yet he knew that he had never seen Numa climb a tree or Histah with the head and belly of an old black man whom Tarzan had already slain.

Finally with a sigh he gave up trying to fathom the unfathomable; yet in his heart of hearts he knew that something had come into his life that he never before had experienced—another life which existed when he slept.

Then he commenced to wonder if some of these strange creatures which he met in his sleep might not slay him; for at such times Tarzan of the Apes seemed to be a different Tarzan, sluggish, helpless and timid—wishing to flee his enemies as fled Bara the deer.

Thus, with a dream, came the first faint tinge of a knowledge of fear, a knowledge which Tarzan, awake, had never experienced. Perhaps he was experiencing what his early forbears passed through and transmitted to posterity in the form of superstition first and religion later; for they, as Tarzan, had seen things at night which they could not explain by the daylight standards of sense-perception or of reason.

AS Tarzan concentrated his mind on the little bugs upon the printed page before him, the active recollection

of his strange adventures presently merged into the text of that which he was reading—a story of Bolgani, the gorilla, in captivity. There was a more or less lifelike illustration of Bolgani in colors, and in a cage, with many remarkable looking *tarmangani* standing against a rail and peering curiously at the snarling brute. Tarzan wondered not a little, as he always did, at the odd and seemingly useless array of colored plumage which covered the bodies of the *tarmangani*. It always caused him to grin a trifle when he looked at these strange creatures. He wondered if they so covered their bodies from shame of their hairlessness, or because they thought the odd things they wore added any to the beauty of their appearance.

Slowly the ape-man picked out the meaning of the various combinations of letters on the printed page, and as he read, the little bugs—for as such he always thought of the letters—commenced to run about in a most confusing manner, blurring his vision and befuddling his thoughts. Twice he brushed the back of a hand smartly across his eyes; but only for a moment could he bring the bugs back to coherent and intelligible form.

Tarzan realized that he was falling asleep, and just as the realization was borne in upon him and he had decided to relinquish himself to an inclination which had assumed almost the proportions of a physical pain, he was aroused by the opening of the cabin door. Turning quickly toward the interruption, Tarzan was amazed, for a moment, to see bulking large in the doorway the huge and hairy form of Bolgani the gorilla.

NOW, there was scarcely a denizen of the great jungle with whom Tarzan would not rather have been cooped up inside the small cabin than Bolgani the gorilla; yet he felt no fear, even though his quick eye noted that Bolgani was in the throes of that jungle-madness which seizes upon so many of the fiercer males.

But for Tarzan there was no escape. Bolgani was glowering at him from red-rimmed, wicked eyes. In a moment he would rush in and seize the ape-man.

Tarzan reached for the hunting-knife where he had laid it on the table beside him; but as his fingers did not immediately locate the weapon, he turned a quick glance in search of it. As he did so, his eyes fell upon the book he had been looking at, which still lay open at the picture of Bolgani. Tarzan found his knife, but he merely fingered it idly and grinned in the direction of the advancing gorilla.

Not again would he be fooled by empty things which came while he slept! In a moment, no doubt, Bolgani would turn into Pamba the rat, with the head of Tantor the elephant; Tarzan had seen enough of such strange happenings recently to have some idea as to what he might expect. But this time Bolgani did not alter his form as he came slowly toward the young ape-man.

Tarzan was a bit puzzled, too, that he felt no desire to rush frantically to some place of safety as had been the sensation most conspicuous in the other of his new and remarkable adventures. He was just himself now, ready to fight if necessary, but still sure that no flesh-and-blood gorilla stood before him.

The thing should be fading away into thin air by now, thought Tarzan, or changing into something else; yet it did not. Instead, it loomed clear-cut and real as Bolgani himself, the magnificent dark coat glistening with life and health in a bar of sunlight which shot across the cabin through the high window behind the young Lord Greystoke. This was quite the most realistic of his sleep-adventures, thought Tarzan, as he passively awaited the next amusing event.

THEN the gorilla charged. Two mighty, calloused hands seized upon the ape-man; great fangs were bared close to his face; a hideous growl burst from the cavernous throat; and hot breath fanned Tarzan's cheek. But still Tarzan sat grinning at the apparition. Tarzan might be fooled once or twice, but not for so many times in succession! He knew that this Bolgani was no real Bolgani, for had he been, he could never have gained entrance to the cabin, since only Tarzan knew how to operate the latch.

The gorilla seemed puzzled by the

strange passivity of the hairless ape. He paused an instant with his jaws snarling close to the other's throat; then he seemed suddenly to come to some decision. Whirling the ape-man across a hairy shoulder, as easily as you or I might lift a babe in arms, Bolgani turned and dashed out into the open.

Now indeed was Tarzan sure that this was a sleep-adventure, and so he grinned largely as the giant gorilla bore him unresisting away. Presently, reasoned Tarzan, he would awaken and find himself back in the cabin where he had fallen asleep. He glanced back at the thought, and saw the cabin-door standing wide open. This would never do! Always had he been careful to close and latch it against wild intruders. Manu the monkey would make sad havoc there among Tarzan's treasures, should he have access to the interior for even a few minutes.

The question which arose in Tarzan's mind was a baffling one. Where did sleep adventures end and reality commence? How was he to be sure that the cabin-door was not really open? Everything about him appeared quite normal; there were none of the grotesque exaggerations of his former sleep-adventures. It would be better, then, to be upon the safe side and make sure that the cabin-door was closed; it would do no harm, even if all that seemed to be happening were not happening at all.

Tarzan essayed to slip from Bolgani's shoulder, but the great beast only growled ominously and gripped him tighter. With a mighty effort, the ape-man wrenched himself loose, and as he slid to the ground, the dream-gorilla turned ferociously upon him, seized him once more and buried great fangs in a sleek brown shoulder.

AS the pain and the hot blood aroused Tarzan's fighting instincts the grin of derision faded from his lips. Asleep or awake, this thing was no longer a joke! Biting, tearing and snarling, the two rolled over upon the ground. The gorilla now was frantic with insane rage. Again and again he loosed his hold upon the ape-man's shoulder in an

attempt to seize the jugular; but Tarzan of the Apes had fought before with creatures who struck first for the vital vein, and each time he wriggled out of harm's way as he strove to get his fingers upon his adversary's throat. At last he succeeded; his great muscles tensed and knotted beneath his smooth hide as he strove with every ounce of his mighty strength to push the hairy torso from him. And as he choked Bolgani and strained him away, his other hand crept slowly upward between them until the point of the hunting-knife rested over the savage heart. Then there was a quick movement of the steel-thewed wrist, and the blade plunged to its goal.

Bolgani, the gorilla, voiced a single frightful shriek, tore himself loose from the grasp of the ape-man, rose to his feet, staggered a few steps and then plunged to earth. There were a few spasmodic movements of the limbs, and the brute was still.

Tarzan of the Apes stood looking down upon his kill, and as he stood there, he ran his fingers through his thick, black shock of hair. Presently he stooped and touched the dead body. Some of the red lifeblood of the gorilla crimsoned his fingers. He raised them to his nose and sniffed. Then he shook his head and turned toward the cabin. The door was still open. He closed it and fastened the latch. Returning toward the body of his kill, he again paused and scratched his head.

If this was a sleep-adventure, what, then, was reality? How was he to know the one from the other? How much of all that had happened in his life had been real and how much unreal?

He placed a foot upon the prostrate form and raising his face to the heavens, gave voice to the kill-cry of the bull ape. Far in the distance a lion answered. It was very real, and yet he did not know! Again shaking his head, he turned away into the jungle.

No, he did not know what was real and what was not; but there was one thing that he did know: never again would he eat of the flesh of Tantor the elephant.

There will be another of these "New Stories of Tarzan" in our next issue.



Red Apples and Rouge

By James Francis Dwyer

THE PINK HEN advertises "a dollar table d'hôte and something different in cabarets," and the advertisement makes a long description of the restaurant unnecessary. The intelligent reader can picture the place. Pleasure limps to rag-time, and a million food-odors battle for supremacy in the cigarette-smoke. Men and women crouch over their drinks as if they were court-martialing the glasses or the liquids the glasses contain, while heavy-jowled bassos and thin-legged, saffron-haired sopranos batter the brains of the solemn drinkers by howling assertions that they, the singers, are going back to Alabama, Michigan, Honolulu or some other old place whose name the song-composer has artfully picked from an atlas.

Dod bust 'em, they never go! They stay and howl about their intentions while the patrons industriously pretend they are having a good time in holding the leg of a wineglass and listening to the howler telling what he will do to the wily corn-tassel and the tricky sweet potato when he gets back to the dear old farm.

The Pink Hen is different to the others in only one particular. That particular is Mamie Conlon. Mamie has been at the Hen since old Martin Halligan opened the place, years before cun-

ning restaurateurs used the loud-mouthed imitation Cook tourist to choke the kicks which irate customers made concerning the food. Halligan was the first food-retailer to discover that people listening to a singer have no violent love for a person at a near-by table who is loudly informing the waiter that he has dug a nail and the lid of a tobacco-tin out of his goulash. Halligan was the originator of "the-other-people-can't-hear-if-you-kick" strangle which the restaurant-keepers have brought to such perfection. Nowadays one never hears a decent old-time argument between a waiter and a guest. They cannot happen, because the listening idiots surrounding the complainant frown at any interruption which prevents them from hearing the maniacal assertions of a singer who avers again and again that he is going to Rio or Callao, although his fare to Flatbush lies lonely in the pocket of his jeans.

MA RTIN HALLIGAN discovered Mamie Conlon in a side-street in the Bronx. Martin visited the Bronx to see a sick cousin, and in passing a little cottage he heard Miss Conlon warbling a ballad entitled: "My Mother's Face Grows Dearer Every Day," and there and then Halligan conceived the idea of hiring Mamie to sing to his patrons while they fought bouts

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with the fricasseed chicken and portions of the athletic Texas steer. The scheme was a great success. Often the chicken and the steer went to their last resting-place in a shower of tears provoked by Mamie's sentimental ballads; the complaints fell off fifty per cent, and the waiters' tips increased. The Pink Hen's regulars liked the ballads and liked Mamie. The girl was clean and wholesome, a well-built, wide-bosomed creature who believed that the world was a good old world in spite of muck-rakers, reformers and the discomforts produced by a daily ride to and from the Bronx.

When Halligan introduced a regular cabaret, Mamie stayed, and no matter how loudly the midnight choo-choo-catcher howled, it was Mamie who got the grand applause with a ballad about some feature of her mother or some portion of the old lady's clothes or furniture to which a ballad could be affixed.

"It's simple," said Martin Halligan, when explaining Mamie's popularity. "Every one of the bunch has had a mother, but a lot of 'em hate midnight trains an' farms, an' they wouldn't go to Dixie or Honolulu if you paid their fares twicet. She makes *me* cry, an' me mother died in Ireland over forty years ago."

So Mamie Conlon became a fixture that the Pink Hen could not dispense with. Gentle, lovable and sympathetic, she gave to the place a dash of old-world atmosphere that was immensely pleasing. She had a thousand friends, was welcome at every table because of her smiles and her stories, and was the confidante of every woman connected with the place, from the newest danseuse to the portly Mrs. Halligan.

IT was a warm September night, and the Pink Hen was crowded. Mamie Conlon had just created thunderous applause by telling of a dimple which her mother always wore, and following Mamie's usual custom, she stepped down from the stage to exchange greetings with old friends at the tables.

At the far end of the dining-room she paused to speak to a man who was sitting alone at one of the small side-tables. The man was of a peculiar type.

He was about thirty-five years of age, lean-faced and dark-complexioned. His eyes were deep-set, eyes that gave one the impression they were endeavoring to take refuge from some unpleasant sight with which they momentarily expected to be confronted. Their bashfulness made the nose more prominent. It stood out predatory and hawklike, while the thin lips were not rendered more pleasing by the fact that the slightest downward turn at the corners of the mouth was noticeable when the face was in repose. He was a pure city type, lacking vitality, physically undeveloped, slim-chested and mean-looking.

"Hello, Mamie," he said, looking up quickly from his glass.

"Hello, George," murmured the girl. "I haven't seen Nell this evening," said the man. "I've been here an hour, and she hasn't done a turn."

"Uh-huh," said Miss Conlon softly; then, after a slight pause, she put the query: "You haven't been in for a couple of days, have you, George?"

"No, Mamie. I've been off color. Went to bed for two days to rest up. Wont you sit down?"

"I think I will," said the girl. "I was lookin' for a quiet place to eat this apple in. Did you ever see a better apple than that, George?"

"It's a beauty, Mamie. Where did you get it?"

"From Sullivan County. Got five dozen of 'em this mornin'."

"Charming the gentle farmers, eh?"

"Nix, George, nix."

"How the fruit, then?"

Mamie Conlon bisected the apple, and the man watched her. She peeled a section, ate it slowly and then spoke:

"It's the best-tastin' apple I ever ate," she said. "It's a glorious apple. You asked me how I got five dozen of 'em, didn't you? Say, George, would you like to hear a story, a real human story about the Pink Hen?"

"Sure," said the man.

"Well, I'll tell you one, George—a real, real, real story. Wait till I eat this apple, an' I'll get to it."

MISS CONLON ate the big apple, wiped her fingers carefully and leaned forward.

"George," she said, "if you think you know the girl I'm goin' to tell you about, just think again an' tell yourself you're thinkin' wrong. Whatever girl you think it's about, it isn't. Do you get me? This girl was the prettiest the Pink Hen ever had in the show, an' that doesn't make it any easier for you, because you think 'em all the prettiest. But this one could stack up points against all the movie-queens you ever saw an' still have enough over to beat the dames on the tooth-powder an' chewin'-gum posters.

"She used to sing songs like 'I'm the Dearest, Cutest Melon in the Patch,' an' 'I Wish I Was a Searchlight, an' You a Big, Big Zep.' They were songs for the Billies an' the Betties who think they can make macadamized matrimonial roads out of goo-goo looks an' moonshine. This little girl was good, too. I know that. I'm thirty-nine the tenth of next month, an' no little broiler can make me believe she's St. Elizabeth if I don't want to believe.

"This little girl was Elsie, an' that makes it harder for you to place her, because it wasn't Elsie. She was delicate, an' in the spring an' summer she'd get a hobo feelin' that'd want to make her ditch her job an' go gallopin' over the New Jersey hills to talk confidential with old Ma Nature.

"It gets me, Mamie," she used to say. "When spring comes, I get so mad to get away that I could kill old Halligan an' everyone in the restaurant."

"Don't you think you've got a corner on that breed of feelin's," I would say back to her. "I've got your feelin's multiplied by six. Broadway looks like a mess with the lid off, and the Pink Hen gives me mental ptomaines. New York is worse to me than Jericho was after the Hebrews did it up, and if I could unhook myself, I'd float away to Mesopotamia, Macedonia, Judea, or any one of those quiet, sit-under-your-own-palm spots mentioned in the Bible."

"I wish I could go to one of 'em," she'd say. "I like their names."

"Names are nothin' to go by," I said to her once. "A rube from the green patches seein' the sign of a pink hen would think we were runnin' an egg-layin' contest, but we're not."

"Old Halligan steered 'longside just as I said that, an' he heard my remark. 'What's that, Mamie?' he said. 'Nothin',' I answered. 'I was just tellin' Elsie that a rube seein' a pink hen done in electric lights would think we were sellin' incubators.'

"That's a good idea," said Halligan. "I'll put an incubator in the dinin'-room an' put out a sign readin': 'Come in an' see the chickens.'"

"He did, too. He plunked an incubator right in the middle of the room an' hung out a sign readin': 'Come in an' see the chickens. A full hundred of 'em, an' not a one of 'em has a mother to boss her,' Which was the truth.

THAT sign about the chickens brought Clem. Clem is his first name, an' you can make his second Brown or White or any old name you like. He came in to see the chicks, an' he stayed because Elsie was singin' her song about bein' the dearest, cutest melon in the patch. He had 'R. F. D.' stamped all over him, an' he stood obstructin' traffic in the main aisle till Lippy Bob, the head waiter, led him to a seat an' told him that it was necessary to introduce himself to Herr Budweiser or J. Barleycorn-cum-Croton to help him hold his trench.

"Clem took the introduction, but the poison didn't make him lose interest in Elsie. He stared at her like Mrs. Winkle stared at old Rip Van when he came back an' pretended that he had been asleep for twenty years. Say, George, do you think any sane woman would believe that old geezer, Winkle? He had beat it with some one an' then he pulled the long-sleep stuff on Mrs. R. V. W. when the other dame pushed him out on the pike. An' with a name like Rip, too!

"Clem was nearly as big as Goliath, the guy that little David put onto the Ostermoor with a pebble, an' he looked like a summer vacation on legs, he was that tanned an' outdoory like. An' stare! Say, he hung his headlights onto Elsie an' kept the full glow on her till she got mad.

"Hick!" she snapped, when she was passin' him.

"'Beg pardon!' he said, jumpin' to his feet an' feedin' the Milwaukee to the tablecloth. 'What did you say?'"

"'I called you hick,' said Elsie.

"'Why, that isn't my name,' he called out. 'My name's Clem—just plain Clem.'

"'Could you beat it? It was that funny that Elsie burst out laughin', an' he started to laugh too. Only his laugh wasn't a laugh; it was a subway explosion. It loosened a plume in a woman's hat an' set a flag wavin' over the orchestra.

"'Said Elsie to him: 'Can you always laugh like that?'"

"'Sure,' he said.

"'Then unloose one of the same kind when I go on again,' said Elsie. 'Wait till I pull the joke about what *Miss Parsnip* said to *Miss Carrot* when she found her in the soup; then make that sound hard. Do you get me?'"

"'Of course,' he said. 'Why, I'll just love to do it.'

"THEY tell me that the laughin' hyena carries the grin-medal, but the hyena couldn't get a clap if he went up against Clem. He had a laugh that had no brothers or sisters or distant relatives. It could get the goat of a Klaxon horn with the first toot, an' when he shook it loose, it just tore out onto Broadway an' raced up toward Times Square.

"Topaz Tommy Turner was telephoning to his girl when Clem turned in the fire-alarm, an' Topaz Tommy signaled Loppy Bob to disconnect the buzzer. Bob galloped over to Clem's table an' howled at him.

"'Stop it, you rube!' he yelled. 'Stop it or I'll chuck you out!'"

"Clem didn't jam on the brakes so that you'd notice the slowin' up. That laugh of his was a thing you'd have to attack with an iron bar. It just got up an' shook the windows with both hands, an' when it hit the ceilin', it fell back more viciouser than ever.

"'Stop it, you big hick!' yelled Loppy Bob. 'Stop it, or I'll jerk you into the night!'"

"'Can't I laugh?' asked Clem.

"'Sure,' said Bob. 'But you're not laughin'! You're *ârin'* a grand salute

with your mouth, an' the admiral hasn't come aboard!'"

"Just then Elsie unloosed another joke, an' away went Clem again. He owned a laugh that could have won prizes. It just fought for the spotlight an' pushed all the minor noises under the tables.

"'Out you go, you big giraffe!' yelled Loppy Bob, an' he grabbed Clem by the arm. Bob didn't know Clem was so big, because Clem had a whole lot of himself tucked under the chair, but Loppy soon found out. Say, that Clem was old man Trouble with the collar off. He was General Joffre, Kitchener an' Von Hindenburg travelin' under a false label. He knew more about hurtin' people than a nail in a shoe, George. He just poked Loppy with two fingers, an' Loppy went backward up the room, capsizin' tables an' regular customers an' waiters as if he was bein' paid for rough-housin' the show.

"You've read of Samson, George? Well, Samson pulled down the pillars of a Mormon temple, an' Clem was the same kind of a feller as Mr. Samson. Seven or eight of the waiters rushed to help Loppy when they saw him back-pedalin', an' Clem became a mail-order house for distributin' different kinds of wallops. An' there was no delay, George. The cabaray just stopped cabaraying an' became an interested spectator, an' the guests liked the intermezzo a lot.

"Clem picked up a chair an' used its four legs to prod that bunch of short-change artists when they did a Balacava. One of those legs got in the mouth of a Lithuanian, an' another nearly pushed an ear off a Greek whose sound-snarers stuck out like fifth-story fire-escapes. Some one threw a vegetable dish at Clem, but Clem got out of the way of the dish so it went on a little farther till it committed harry-karry against Loppy Bob's face. Loppy gave a soft grunt an' went down to look at the pattern of the oilcloth, an' just then Elsie managed to catch Clem's eye an' waved him to the door.

"'Beat it!' she yelled. 'Beat it!'"

"Clem took Elsie's advice. He trod on Loppy Bob's fingers in his retreat, tore the Greek's coat off, upset the in-

cubator an' all the chicks an' bounced into the middle of a Broadway theater-crowd that opened up for him to get through an' then closed up to curse him. We were huntin' chickens for an hour after he left the landscape.

"NEXT night Elsie came down here an' found an express-package squattin' over two-thirds of the dressin'-room. It hadn't any name on it. It just said: 'To the girl in the green-velvet dress who sings the song, "I'm the Dearest, Cutest Melon in the Patch."'"

"'A rube must have sent that,' said May Murray. 'A wise guy would have asked a waiter for your label.'"

"'Mebbe,' said Elsie. 'Mebbe. But a real gentleman wouldn't ask a sausage-wagon for a lady's name.'"

"'Oh,' says May. 'Well, unpeel the priceless treasure an' let us feast our eyes upon the silks an' spices an' precious things.'"

"Elsie was that mad that she tore the paper off the packet right in front of May an' then regretted it ninety times a minute for the rest of the night. Do you know what was in that package, George? Of course you don't. There was apples in it—apples! Four dozen of the biggest, reddest let-Adam-take-a-bite kind of fruit that was ever in captivity, an' they were snugglin' up to each other on a bed of parsley!"

"An' there was a note sittin' on the Mrs. Eve's trouble produce. The note said:

"'Dear Miss—I'm sorry I couldn't stay to finish the laugh. I'll come back again an' laugh some more if you want me to.'"

"Elsie wasn't a little bit mad. Not a little bit, George. She looked so mad that I bet if Clem had come along just then, she would have bit him instead of one of his apples. She was unneutral in eleven different ways, an' the door-keeper was the only one that got anything from talkin' to her. He got the apples, the whole four dozen.

"George, do you know that feller Clem walked in that evenin' lookin' as if he was the real dove of peace. Loppy Bob started to converge on him, but Elsie got in the way. She was madder than a fly on a tanglefoot oasis, an' Bob

let her fire the first torpedo, although that vegetable dish had made Loppy look as if he'd been kicked in the face with the screw of a hurryin' submarine.

"'Mr. Clem Hick,' said Elsie, 'what d'ye mean by makin' me the guy of this outfit?'"

"'Guy?' said he. 'Why, you told me to laugh!'"

"'I'm not talkin' about laughs,' said Elsie. 'I'm talkin' about the bunch of truck from a dago's warehouse that you dropped on my wigwam.'"

"'The apples?' he said, lookin' as worried as a live lobster in a restaurant window. 'Why, they're not from a dago's stand! They're from my farm!'"

"'From your farm?' said Elsie.

"'Yes,' said Clem, 'they're from my own place up in Sullivan County, an'—an' I thought you would like 'em because I growed 'em.'"

"Elsie was tryin' to lasso words that would carry her into the open just then. She was a kind-hearted little girl, an' she saw that she had jabbed that big rural-free-delivery guy on the spot where he was cultivatin' an attachment for her.

"'Why,' said she, 'they were nice an' big an' red.'"

"'Not as red as your cheeks,' said Mr. Samson, playfully.

"'Why, that's rouge,' said Elsie.

"'Is it?' chirps the apple-manufacturer. 'Well, it looks nice, whatever it is.'"

"ELSIE was pleased with him for sayin' that, because most hicks hate rouge worse'n the Hittites hated the Jebusites, an' when Loppy Bob said that Clem couldn't be served, she went up in the air quicker than Glenn Curtiss could. Old Martin Halligan came up to them, an' he talked with Clem, an' Clem went an' bought the incubator an' all the baby fowls that weren't lost the night before. After that the feud came to an end, with Clem an' Loppy Bob an' Halligan tellin' lies to each other about overgrown turnips an' watermelons that were as big as canoes.

"Clem came in the next night an' six nights that came after. He talked to Elsie a lot, an' he told her all about the farm where the red apples had grown

up from childhood. The yarns the Hebrew scouts brought back from the Promised Land were nothing to the stories Clem told about his Sullivan County reservation. George, they were wonderful stories, an' they sounded mighty good to a tired little girl who had to sing while a bunch of Broadway shoe-clerks an' stenog's grappled with their provender. Clem told her about nine little pigs that were just born an' did nothin' but squeak, an' he told her about a horse that ate sugar an' crackers, an' a dog called Bill an' another dog called Lassie that had three puppies. An' there was a cow that had a curly horn, an' there were peach-trees an' pear-trees an' twenty apple-trees that the red apples came off.

"Say, George, do you know that stuff was better'n any fairy story that girl ever heard of? It was. She just sat an' listened to him tellin' her about the puppies an' the dog called Bill an' the horse. She just ate it up like as if it was sparrowgrass out of season.

"That's the place where you ought to be, Miss Elsie," Clem would say to her. "You want fresh air an' eggs an' milk."

"You're right," Elsie would say; "that's just what I do want. An' honey?"

"An' honey, girlie," Clem would say back to her. "Honey! Tons of it!"

"Do you know, George, nobody ever spoke to that kid about her health till Clem pulled the build-up-your-system oratory upon her. Yaps would sit opposite her an' offer her everything from Milwaukee's worst to the liqueur stuff that the monks brew over in the St. Bernard Mountains, but no one had ever unloosed about the produce of the busy bee an' the succulent and new-born egg. It took a hick who wasn't ashamed of himself to get that stuff off his mental ticker.

"That was all he said to her, George, an' let me tell you right now that the guy who worries about a girl's health never gets the line-busy answer when he talks to her. Clem, with a new egg an' a bees' nest in his vocabulary, put it all over the yaps who had Pol Roget an' old man Pommery on the bases. That kid dreamed of cows an' hens an'

bees, an' Sullivan County was the place where she thought all the fleshpots were in cold storage waitin' for her.

"I'll marry you," she said to Clem one evenin' when he asked her, an' that big R. F. D. got up an' kissed her so loud he frightened himself.

"GEORGE, you were never on a farm; so you know nothin' about 'em. You can't read about 'em in books, because no one was ever brave enough to write the truth about 'em. They're an acquired taste, like garlic an' caviar, an' Elsie had a job to acquire it quick enough to hand the Broadway longin' the sleep-punch.

"She told me all this, George. She said that the place was mighty nice at first. She was introduced to the horse that liked sugar, an' to the two dogs, an' the orphan calf; but there were drawbacks. Clem had a mother who was one of these mothers you read about in books, an' he had two sisters that could give Madam Polaire eleven points an' beat her for the man-frightenin' belt. An' there was the silence. Elsie told me the silence used to crawl across Sullivan County about sunset, an' it would put a strangle-hold an' a scissors-grip on that farm so that it was only Bill, the deaf dog, that was game to bark. Bill didn't hear himself, or he wouldn't have been crazy enough to slam his voice into the stillness.

"But she loved Clem, an' she held the trench. She just waded in on the silence by haulin' out the harmonium with its *vox humaner* an' *nux vomica* stops, an' she poured melody over the neighborhood so that the dogs got their nerve back an' joined in the choruses.

"An' she tried to keep Clem's ma from gettin' her rattled.

"You can't cook?" the old lady would say to her.

"Only chafin'-dish cookin'," Elsie said.

"What's that?" inquired Mamma.

"Welsh rarebits an' lobster an' that," chirruped Elsie.

"Huh," snorts the old lady; an' she led Elsie out to the kitchen an' introduced her to eleven hundred fryin'-pans an' boilers an' preservin'-pots that the antique knew by their first names.

Those pots climbed into Elsie's dreams. They used to march around her bed like a Hippodrome chorus, grinnin' at her an' tellin' her over an' over again what she could cook in 'em an' what she couldn't cook in 'em. 'I'm for huckleberries,' says one; an' 'I'm for peaches,' says another; 'an' I'm for stewin' cranberries,' snorts another, 'an' if you use me for anythin' else there'll be trouble.' George, what that girl suffered through misrememberin' the first names of those buckets would torpedo any ordinary brain. But she loved Clem, an' she tried her hardest to keep the surnames an' professions of those boilers in her head. The old dame knew the features of every one of those kettles so that she could recognize 'em with her eyes shut, but Elsie would stare at 'em for hours without rememberin' their initials or their private occupations.

"AN' then there were the Polaire twins, Clem's sisters. They just made a business of annoyin' Elsie like the Egyptians annoyed the Jews before Moses did the General Coxey stunt for the cactus-patches. They were human porcupines with a habit of rubbin' against people they didn't like. They didn't declare war on Elsie; they just treated her as a neutral so as to block any kicks she could make to Clem. An' you know what you can do to a neutral if you're clever, George.

"Those two females cut the Pink Hen into nine hundred verbal grenades an' torpedoes, an' Elsie spent most of her spare time duckin' an' dodgin'. They thought the Hen was a joint where *Vice* did the Lady Godiva act at every fifteen minutes past the hour, an' they believed that Elsie was personally acquainted with every high-roller that ever blew up his heritage with a corkscrew. They asked her questions about all the guys that Billy Sunday thinks are shootin' to the basement of the other world on a racin'-car, an' when that poor little kid said she didn't even know their names, they got mad.

"A lot of the dames in the big green patches have that delusion. You couldn't make 'em believe that a singin'-girl at a Broadway restaurant was virtuous if you got Doc Parkhurst an' the

Society for the Suppression of Vice to indorse your affidavit. Elsie was a private in the Lost Legion, as far as they were concerned, an' they let her know that they thought Clem was the original hickory-nut for importin' her into Sullivan County.

"She tried to keep her troubles from Clem, but some of 'em peeped out of the little silences between her words.

"Does Betsy an' Lil annoy you?' he asked Elsie.

"No,' said Elsie, 'they're very kind to me.'

"An' does Mother upset you?' he inquired.

"Not a bit,' said Elsie; an' all the pots in the kitchen laughed when they heard her answer. Those pots knew!

"Elsie an' the harmonium had chased the silence into the wilderness, but Clem's mommer an' Clem's two sisters could make small annoyances like the seven plagues of Egypt look like a cent that a steam engine has gone an' trod on. When the old woman wasn't teachin' her cookin', the two girls were cookin' her. They wanted to know things about Broadway that Elsie didn't know. They asked her about people she never saw—Eva Tanguay, Diamond Jim Brady, Kid McCoy, George Cohan, Flo Ziegfeld an' folks like that, an' when she said that the family habits of the bunch were as foreign to her as the menu-card of the King of Zululand, they got mad.

"But you were singin' in a Broadway restaurant,' Betsy would splutter, 'an' you try to act as if you never saw anythin' bad in your life.'

"I didn't,' Elsie would say back to them. 'The Pink Hen is a perfectly proper place.'

"Oh, my!' Lil would squeak, an' they'd keep on batin' her till she'd run off into the woods an' cry her eyes out.

"THE local church up there promoted a concert, an' Clem's two sisters asked Elsie to sing at it. That kid was so innocent that she didn't know the game of that brace. She was from Broadway, but you take it from me, George, that there are dames in the back pastures who could short-change the first wife that old King Solomon

married. An' I bet she knew, a little after she had acted as a reception-committee to the six hundred an' ninety-nine that the old man brought into his outfit afterwards.

"What did you sing at the Pink Hen?" Betsy said.

"I sang 'I'm the Dearest, Cutest Melon in the Patch,' an' another song about 'I Wish I Was a Searchlight an' You a Big, Big Zep,'" said Elsie.

"Let's hear 'em," said Lil. 'Sing 'em to us, an' then we'll tell you if they're suitable.'

"That little kid sung both songs to those two human shoehorns, an' they wriggled on their chairs like two pine-snakes that had been eatin' pins. They were thinkin' how they'd get her in bad, an' it was so easy to do it that they wanted to pat each other on the back.

"Oh," says Betsy, 'I think the song about the searchlight an' the Zeppelin is a peach. Don't you, Lil?'

"You can guess how Lil supported that remark. Those two antiques had hearts made out of pure Carrara, an' a little innocent kid from Broadway had as much chance with them as the Angel Gabriel would have with a pair of poker-sharps.

"You don't know anythin' about villages, George, because you've never been farther from New York than the Polo Grounds, but that Sullivan County hamlet was a place where the wanderings of the Israelites was the main course in the educational swarrees in the old red schoolhouse. Every house had a wall-map of Palestine an' the adjacent territory. They named places with biblical names, an' half the kids had handles like Elijah, Jeremiah, Job, Daniel an' Potiphar. I don't know if I'm right about Potiphar, but it's last-century stuff, anyhow.

"**E**LSIE came third on the bill the night of the concert, an' that poor little innocent kid from Broadway climbed onto the stage an' started to warble about the searchlight an' the Zep. George, that song on the White Way wouldn't disturb the feelin's of a delegation from the W. C. T. U., but up there it created a bigger sensation than the sinkin' of the *Lusitania*. It

did! When Elsie flung the first verse at 'em, they pushed their faces forward an' swallowed like ostriches in a nail-factory. It was that silent you could hear the spiders weavin' in the rafters an' the little frogs takin' their bath in the pond in the churchyard.

"Elsie cut the second verse adrift, an' they just ate it up without any dressin'. Do you know how it goes? It's somethin' like this:

"I'd follow you through space, dear
love,
I'd hug you as you fled,
My beams would kiss your supple
form,
Your smilin' face an' head.
I'd touch your dainty ankles, love,
Your ankles full of pep,
If I was but a searchlight, love,
An' you a big, big Zep.

"When she finished the second verse, the head deacon shot himself out of his seat an' advanced in open order on the stage. He had his right hand hoisted like a traffic-cop, an' his mouth was shut as tight as a gamblin'-joint when a raidin'-party is across the street.

"Stop!" he screamed. "Stop!"

"Elsie stopped quick, but that deacon wasn't satisfied with that. He started to hustle her toward the wings, an' that was somethin' that stirred Clem. He hoisted himself out of his seat an' rushed the stage to help Elsie, an' all the hicks jumped to their feet to see Ma Trouble flap the atmosphere with her wings.

"That deacon was a fool. He struck at Clem, an' Clem got annoyed. He picked the deacon up in his arms an' banged his bump of reverence against a hot lamp that was hangin' over the stage, then he slung him hard into the orchestra, smashin' a big drum that belonged to the band.

"Elsie didn't wait to see any more. The whole audience was chargin' Clem at the double, an' so she fled. She rushed back to the farmhouse an' wrote him a note, just a little foolish note tellin' him that she loved him but she thought it was best for her an' for him if she cleared out an' left him alone. She was just a simple kid, George, an' the only way she saw of helpin' Clem was by leavin' him.

"She told him in that letter that she

Red Apples and Rouge

By James Francis Dwyer

loved him better than anythin' else on earth, but she couldn't stand for his mother an' his two sisters. An' she knew he couldn't leave his mother an' the farm. Clem had promised his father that he would stay with the old lady an' run the farm, an' that young kid loved Clem too much to want him to break his promise over her. Do you understand, George? She was class with a great big C to it, an' although that old dame an' the two girls had made her as miserable as an oyster on the half-shell, she didn't want to hand them out anythin' as hard as a brick or an empty bottle. She was a sweet, kind kid, was Elsie.

"WELL, George, she came to my place one mornin' an' told me everything. Told me how she loved Clem so much that she had to clear out from him.

"What shall I do, Mamie?" she said. 'I've got to work an' keep myself.'

"Elsie," I said back to her, 'you just sit quiet; things always straighten themselves in their own way.'

"But he musn't know where I am," she said. 'You wont tell him, Mamie?'

"No, child," I said, 'I wont tell him. If you want to, you can come back to the Pink Hen an' sing, an' that wont hurt your love for Clem a bit—not a bit.'

"That's what I said to her, George. I went an' told Martin Halligan, an' Elsie came back that night. An' that night I got three wires from Clem, an' one of the wires filled two pages. He wanted to know if I knew where she was, an' I wired back that I didn't. It cost Clem somethin' for those wires; telegrams are expensive amusements.

"Elsie came back here an' sang her little songs about melons an' searchlights an' things like that, an' everybody liked her an' wanted to buy her drinks. Sometimes she'd drink somethin' soft like lemonade, but most often she wouldn't. An' she loved Clem all the time, loved him harder than a feller like you could understand, George.

"She was here four months when I got a telegram, a telegram from Clem.

I read it, an' then I took it over to Elsie. She had just sung a song, an' the crowd were hollerin' for another.

"Don't go out, Elsie," I said. 'Just sit down an' read that.'

"She sat down an' read the wire, an' then she burst out cryin'. Do you know what was in that wire, George? You couldn't guess. It said: 'If you ever meet Elsie, tell her that Mother was buried yesterday an' that Lil and Betsy are goin' to live with my brother. Ask her if she wont come back, now that I'm alone.'"

MAMIE CONLON paused and eyed the man sitting opposite. Her gaze traveled over his lined face, noting the hungry eyes, the twitching mouth with its turned-down corners, the expression of ratlike cunning. She rose slowly, and the man moistened his lips and put a question.

"And she went?" he inquired, his voice tense. "She went back to him?"

"By the first train," answered the girl. "An' do you know what she did the moment she got there? She sent me five dozen of the biggest, reddest apples—"

The man sprang to his feet and gripped the wrist of Mamie Conlon.

"You devil!" he cried. "You devil, to tell me of it like that. I loved her too! I did! I did! I didn't know anything about her, but I came here tonight to ask her to chuck the Pink Hen and clear out—"

"George," interrupted the ballad-singer, "that little girl was no more made for you than Aaron's rod was made for John Philip Sousa to conduct his band with! She's got a real man, George, an' she's happy. Happy! She didn't want Broadway! She wanted milk an' eggs an' honey, an' if Sullivan County isn't the Promised Land, I'll bet little Nell thinks there's no difference between it an' the real spot shown on the maps of Palestine. Well, I've got to warble some more about Mother's dimples; then I'll take the submarine route to the Bronx with the red apples. Some apples, aint they, George?"

But George didn't answer.

Another story by James Francis Dwyer in an early issue.



St. Anthony and Lady Cleopatra

by John Fleming Wilson

SINCE her father had died and left her chief owner of the Southern Mail Packet Line, Angela Barstow had experienced many of the troubles a woman with only a social training will find in contending with unscrupulous, alert and often contemptuous men. Yet all her difficulties had only strengthened her imperious determination to maintain by her own efforts the prestige of her father's company unimpaired. To be sure, the three old comrades and small stockholders to whom he had left the actual direction of affairs were loyal beyond words; but they were afraid of men like the Honorable F. Edwin Hinderwick, at once the most able, secretive and conscienceless man in the All-Seas Trust—the Southern Mail's principal rival. Having matched wits with Hinderwick, Angela no longer feared him, though acknowledging his ability. More and more she grew to recognize his hand in every move against the prosperity of her company, and to enjoy the war of wits—and brute strength. A risky pleasure, she knew! Hinderwick might yet win, and—

Angela refused to harbor the thought. She laid one pink finger on the stubborn

shoulder of her godfather and fellow-director.

"Sh-h! Captain Matthews! Such language about a perfectly good president of a sister republic!"

"The sisterhood is growing too fast down around the isthmus," the old man returned. "Here we've spent all kinds of time in getting our twenty-seven Central American ports arranged in our minds by flags, national hymns and concessionary laws, and now this Don Antonio Rival mixes the whole map up by foisting a revolution on us, embroiling a new flag and erecting the Republic of Verdad instead of the old Guatemalan port of San Luis. You know what that means, Angela? It means three hours more work at this end seeing another consul in San Francisco, and a whole day's delay in San Luis getting cargo in and out under some brand-new regulations this miserable *presidente* will have drawn up with the particular design and purpose of dragging down all the export and import duties the traffic will bear. And at that, we'll have to carry Guatemalan freight on to the next port. I shouldn't mind it so much if I weren't sure—"

"Of what?" she demanded, still star-

ing at the wall-map on which the boundaries of the new republic were marked by heavy blue penciling.

"That somebody promoted Don Antonio's little revolution simply to cut us out of a trade that's getting bigger and bigger month by month," he growled. "We had Guatemala right on our list, everyone friendly and obliging. I really thought we had its trade sewed up. Now Don Antonio has its chief port, and I *know* he'll either favor some other line or insist on the Southern Mail's paying handsomely for the privilege of trading."

MISS BARSTOW returned to the big desk where she occasionally sat, and demanded details.

"You have something on your mind, Godfather," she said sharply. "Conrad has been fussing around, and Captain Ames looks as if he were just waiting to bite some one's head off. Talk!"

For five minutes Captain Matthews spoke to the point.

"Don Antonio! They call him the 'Good' down there?" she responded. "Savior of his country? And you think he's saving his country for the All-Seas Trust? Dear me! Mr. Hinderwick at work again?"

"Yes," Matthews said surlily. "And this time he's working where you can't touch him. No girl could go down and haggle with this Don Antonio. Let the All-Seas Trust have their concession!"

"You forget, Godfather, that one St. Anthony was tempted and shared his property with a young lady. This San Antonio—maybe—"

"St. Anthony was tempted by Cleopatra," Captain Matthews said promptly. "I guess Angela Barstow isn't a Cleopatra."

"How delightfully thorough your mythology is," she remarked. "I had forgotten about Cleopatra. To be sure! She met St. Anthony on the Nile, and he sent back word to Rome: 'I came, I saw, I conquered!'"

"It may be," Matthews assented doubtfully. "I disremember. But this St. Anthony is another color of bird. Anyway, he's come, saw and conquered, and it's up to us either to meet his ante or cash in our chips and quit the game."

Angela's eyes darkened. "Now just what does he demand?" she suggested.

"That's the trouble," was the answer. "We know he wants something, and we don't know what it is. When we do know, it'll be too late to beat the other fellow to it. Oh, it's all been fixed!"

Again Angela rose and studied the big map. Then she nodded, as if it were all clear.

"The *Equator* is loading for Central America, isn't she?"

"Sails day after to-morrow," replied Matthews. "I told Simms we'd stow all the freight consigned to San Luis deep in the hold. So if there's any trouble, he can just mosey on down the coast and keep it aboard till he finds out definitely where he is. No good in landing goods without knowing whether the consignee will get them."

"Excellent!" Angela murmured. "I'll go down myself with the Captain, I think."

"You aren't serious," Matthews roared, suddenly alert.

His god-daughter raised her voice a little. "Serious? I want to meet the new president of Verdad. Arrange it, please."

To Captain Matthews' call came his two associates to add their voices to his protests against what they termed a dangerous and almost immodest adventure. But their superior waved their arguments away, issued her commands and departed.

"She spoiled Hinderwick's game once," Conrad growled. "That was as risky a bit of business as ever was put over. Don Antonio is no man to fool with. I—I'm afraid!"

Ezekiel Ames ended the discussion by a curt: "I'll have a chin-chin with Captain Simms. I'll just make him understand that he's to keep Angela on board the *Equator* and not let her fall into the hands of this new revolutionist. I—I hate to think of what would happen if he once got her into his power. He'd make the Southern Mail bankrupt itself to ransom her."

SIXTEEN days later the *Equator* was steaming through a smooth, oily sea clouded with strange colors which glowed and faded, spread and died

under a hot sky. The awnings were asleep in the windless air, and the up-pouring smoke from the funnel lay heavily and low. Captain Simms leaned on the rail of the bridge and contemplated Miss Barstow with a quizzical expression of amusement.

"That's all very well," he remarked. "I'll admit that the citizens of the new republic *do* hail this Don Antonio as San Antonio. But you'll find out that he made a revolution and a new republic for just one cause: to make money. You'd better forget all this talk about liberty and equality. The man will smile and wave his hands and apparently be deeply gratified at your compliments. But when it comes down to whether the Southern Mail shall keep its old privileges or let the All-Seas have the trade, San Antonio will become Don Antonio and present the bill."

"St. Anthony lost his cloak, and Lord Antony lost his kingdom—each to a lady," Angela returned quietly.

"I recall the incidents," Simms assented. "You can hardly play the part of either—er—lady."

Miss Barstow drew herself up. "I never suggested that I play any such rôles. My point was that this Don or San Antonio might perform according to namesakes. Though if need be—I have a notion that Cleopatra was quite the *grande dame*—I may assent to deceive."

"Whatever you assent to do," the Captain returned gruffly, "you will *not* visit the palace without me along."

"My faithful Simms! Well, that's only fair. I agree."

Simms straightened himself up, walked to the compass, glanced at it and addressed his watch-officer.

"Sou'-sou'west one-half south," he ordered. "We'll make the run to San Luis in four hours."

Angela nodded. "I'm wirelesslying to the *Presidente* to do me the honor of dining on board to-night with his suite."

Simms gaped. "He'll be insulted!" he warned her. "He thinks the ruler of a little republic is ten times bigger than the head of the Southern Mail."

"A word in your ear," Angela responded. "Don Antonio will come."

THE wireless man appeared at the head of the ladder, hand to cap.

"A message from Don Antonio Rival, Miss Barstow," he said.

She took the paper and smiled as she ran over the long reply to her invitation.

"At once an acceptance and a challenge, Captain Simms," she remarked quietly, and handed him the sheet.

Slowly and painstakingly the master of the *Equator* read what was written. His somber face ruddied.

"He's coming, and it's signed *Hinderwick, Minister Foreign Affairs*," he said in a stifled voice. "That shows what chance we have. Hinderwick promoted that revolution, and now he's personally conducting his title president around. But—"

"Exactly," Angela agreed. "He owes us a turn, doesn't he? And he isn't a bit afraid that we'll kidnap his president or spoil his schemes. I see that we shall have a delightful time at dinner."

Simms raised troubled eyes. "There's no anchorage outside the three-mile limit," he remarked. "We'll be quite at his mercy."

"Mr. Hinderwick will be careful," she returned. "Remember, Don Antonio will be here. I can trust him!"

To this Israel Simms thought fit to make no reply. In consultation with his chief engineer he issued a single command:

"Lay four good hoses along the decks, connect 'em to the steam pipes and have your best men stand by 'em. If I give the word turn on the steam and we'll have an impromptu stew. Our little Lady Cleopatra can meet Lord Antony if she likes, but we'll keep an eye on the gentleman merely for the sake of the Southern Mail."

NIGHT had fallen when the steamship *Equator* at last swung to her anchor and became silent and motionless on the surface of the starry sea. Close in, scattered lights of San Luis flickered and flared, and beyond them the grim shadows of the mountains merged with the moonless sky. Mere sighs of warm air breathed across the waters, and here and there a pallid patch of phosphorescence burned dimly

above some obscure submarine current.

Captain Simms surveyed his preparations for the reception of the visitor and proceeded to his cabin. There he stood, hands on his hips, staring at nothing, till Angela suddenly stood in the door and said: "They are coming?"

"A boat was off to say they were coming," he answered, scowling. Then his countenance changed. His eyes warmed as he looked at the slender figure of the beautiful woman whose pale, haughty face bore a faint cloud of weariness.

"You are sorry they accepted?" he ventured.

She laughed. "No. It will be fun. Only—"

"Only what, Miss Barstow?"

"I should like it to be worth my while. After all, Mr. Hinderwick is rather a bore. And Don Antonio is probably quite unrepresentable. I should like for once to deal with a real pirate—or a handsome buccaneer. Do you think I should succeed?"

"With real people? Don't make any mistake, Miss Barstow. These two fellows are worthy antagonists—as you will discover."

For a moment Angela was no longer the serene and cool mistress of a great business. Girlishly she stepped forward, lifting her filmy skirt with a movement at once graceful and petulant.

"Practice, captain! Some day—well, some day I shall meet—Cæsar."

Outside, a sharp hail shattered the silken silence. There was the tramp of hasty feet, the gruff voice of the chief officer calling his men.

"Antony," she murmured.

When she had walked away, head high, Simms swore softly to himself and went out. He inspected the lines of empty hose lying along the waterways, smiled grimly and then proceeded to greet his guests.

Under the big cluster of lamps at the head of the companion ladder, Don Antonio Rival paused a moment and cast his dark, glittering eyes about him. In that almost infinitesimal period of suspense, Israel Simms fairly flared with passion.

"They've got us and they know it!" he thought. But almost instantly he continued on his way, forcing himself to assume a civil and untroubled expression. Back in his mind was the notion that Angela Barstow was ready—with what plan, he did not know.

"It may come to the steam hose," he said to himself.

YET within a quarter of an hour it seemed as if the daring venture had been effective. The big table in the brilliantly lighted saloon was a fine picture, Don Antonio seated by the side of Angela Barstow, the exquisite and imperturbable Hinderwick across from him, perfectly at his ease. Down the table a half-dozen well-dressed and pleasantly well-mannered members of his suite made a court before which Angela shone radiantly.

The formalities were over, and Captain Simms saw that the new ruler of a new republic was strongly interested in his hostess. His keen, bloodless face expressed at once curiosity, pique and admiration. Twice he had politely ignored an interposition by Hinderwick, who tried to direct the fast-flowing conversation into channels where he himself might shine.

Remembering Hinderwick's sinister history as a financier who was unscrupulous and successful, wicked and respectable, Simms thought he detected in the man's manner a sense of faint alarm. Yet Hinderwick gave no sign whatever that he recalled or bore a grudge for the defeat he had once before met at the hands of Angela and Captain Simms—a defeat, the Captain thought to himself, that no man could forgive. So why this subordinate and almost obsequious manner? Was it possible that the All-Seas Trust had raised to the presidency of Verdad a man whom its representative could not wholly control? He glanced at Angela, then at Don Antonio. The answer flashed on him: the parvenu statesman was dazzled. His quick, crude mind had misinterpreted the whole affair. His vanity was flattered. Simms stirred his big bulk uneasily. Could Angela handle the situation? He turned his eyes once more to the face of the president.

Don Antonio was speaking precise English slowly, his hands moving quickly before him.

"And so I commanded as president of the Republic of Verdad that the port of San Luis be improved into the biggest harbor in Central America. We shall have ships flying our own flag. The United States shall enter into treaties for our commerce. Commerce is the lifeblood of free peoples."

"And so you have made Mr. Hinderwick your minister for Foreign Affairs?" she responded. "He should know how to foster your trade."

"Exactly," said the president. "He has already drawn up plans. San Luis shall have an electric-light factory, a pier with hoisting-engines on it, a fire-protection system—everything needful for the handling of large cargoes. Then trade will come."

Angela smiled softly. "The trade of my ships?" she suggested.

Don Antonio lifted his wineglass and bowed profoundly.

"Ah, you have already arranged matters?" she went on. "I come down here to offer you my compliments on your magnificent and gallant liberation of a whole nation, to offer you the trade my ships carry and you have thought me too tardy! It is settled."

"The Southern Steam," Hinderwick remarked briefly.

"A concession?" Angela inquired.

Don Antonio nodded dreamily.

"The republic needed capital," Hinderwick said courteously. "I was consulted by His Excellency. I advised him to require certain investments from any firm wishing to trade with Verdad. It is in the nature of a bond for fair treatment of Verdad."

ANGELA beamed. "I see. May I guess? You made the conditions of exclusive trade with Verdad the building of the pier, the erection of the light-plant and the installation of a water-system for the protection of the warehouses and freight-sheds. Am I right?"

Don Antonio leaned forward. "You approve?"

"My company would have been willing to do that," she said simply. "But

as we are too late, we shall transfer our trade to old Guatemala."

"Oh, you will still call here," Hinderwick said. "You can't afford to lose this business."

"Yes, you will share it," Don Antonio added quickly. "Of course, you will deal not with merchants directly, but through the concessionaires."

"And who are they? the Southern Steam Packet?" she remarked. "Where have they built the pier?"

"It is not yet constructed," Don Antonio said. "It is regrettable. I did not know Miss Barstow was interested."

"And I came down specially to see you," she answered.

Hinderwick smiled. "The bids were opened some time ago. The Southern Steam's was the most advantageous. They have contracted to complete the work within six months."

Blazing contempt glorified Angela's face. She gave one scornful glance at the Minister of Foreign Affairs and then turned to the President—who was evidently astonished at this sudden right-about.

"Don Antonio," she said in her clear, fine voice, "you have been deceived. On what terms did you grant this so valuable concession? And then to wait six months for the completion of the work? It should be done thirty days hence. Otherwise—you will lose all the coffee-business."

"How?" Don Antonio demanded, his mustaches bristling.

"I have bought the entire output of this republic," she said, "for five years. I made the bargain on the basis of building proper warehouses and a pier myself. I would have completed it in thirty days—in time to load my ships. In six months? I shall repudiate the bargain. Some one has deceived you."

INTO the President's face a look of ugly suspicion came. His cheekbones shone redly.

"Ah, you had made an offer?"

"To build the pier and light-plant and to endow the treasury of Verdad with a fund of one million dollars in gold," she said quietly. "I did not know Mr. Hinderwick was your secretary for for-

sign affairs." She turned her slow, smoldering eyes on the wondering Hinderwick. "I suppose he offered you two million for your treasury?"

Succinctly the revolutionist cut the threads and plucked at the heart of the matter: "Did you pay the—ah—unknown secretary any sum at all for a—ah—consideration of your proposal?"

Angela frowned. "You mean, did I make it worth his while and did he conceal the affair from you to accept a larger present from a company that would give you, the President, less? We deal with no underlings, Don Antonio. I came down to see you."

Don Antonio looked up at the ceiling, and a faint smile formed at the corners of his mouth.

"It is good," he answered slowly. "Six months is too long to wait. And—it is your coffee. The export-duties are heavy, regrettably heavy. But my treasury is empty."

"And I ship no coffee unless the pier and the loading-machinery is complete," she said promptly.

"Therefore no duties into the treasury," the President remarked. Then he straightened up and smiled. "But there is a clause in that concession that requires the Southern Steam to complete their work within the thirty days if so ordered by the Government for military purposes. We shall so command."

Hinderwick leaned forward. "I think I can persuade His Excellency that there is no necessity," he said smoothly. "Of course, Miss Barstow, I understand how you may take almost any course that will regain to you the privileges of free trade with so great and prosperous a country as Verdad. But why say thirty days for a work requiring months? His Excellency will understand the foolishness of such a statement."

CAPTAIN SIMMS almost started up from his seat at the intensity of the contempt in Angela's voice. She was sitting regally in her chair, her eyes flashing, her cheeks faintly colored, her whole pose one of magnificent and outraged dignity.

"I appeal to His Excellency," she

said slowly, "to the gallant soldier and liberator of Verdad. *He* understands that the word *foolishness* is not applied to the speech of such as himself and myself. I do not like the manner of your servant, Don Antonio."

Under the spell of her eyes the President rose, bowed and said: "Speak with me."

Angela allowed her look of splendid indignation to dissolve into one of serenity.

"I offer as the head of the Southern Mail to build you a pier, to light the port of San Luis by electricity, to do everything needful to make it the capital city of this coast. I offer to have everything complete and to pay into the treasury of the republic one million dollars—all within thirty days," she said distinctly.

Don Antonio's eyes glittered. He glanced at Hinderwick, who smiled maliciously.

"I believe the senate of the republic would consider that," the President said hastily. "It is fair. The other company could at least meet the same terms. My sole interest is for the welfare of my beloved country."

The Honorable F. Edwin Hinderwick rose and bowed. "As Minister for Foreign Affairs," he said suavely, "the interests of Verdad are mine. Miss Barstow's offer is generous. Let us accept her offer. If she fails to live up to the agreement, the Southern Steam will make good on their bargain."

The President threw a look of relief at his minister and smiled. But Captain Simms neither smiled nor showed any sign of appreciation of the fact that his employer had won.

"And I suggest now," went on Hinderwick, studying his lifted wineglass, "that Miss Barstow state what concessions she requires."

"All cargoes, including coffee, free of export-duty for ten years," Angela replied.

Don Antonio laughed delightedly. He filled his glass.

"To the Southern Mail!" he said.

Later Hinderwick sought occasion to say to Angela in a low tone: "You pay a heavy price for an evening's entertainment. Thirty days hence I shall

still be Minister of Foreign Affairs. You will lose six million dollars' worth of coffee."

He withdrew ceremoniously, but when Don Antonio had made his effusive farewells, Hinderwick still maintained an attitude of secret triumph, and just before he left the *Equator* for the launch that had brought them from shore, he allowed himself a final look upward, a stare of haughty contempt.

"MISS BARSTOW," Captain Simms said heavily, "I don't know what the game was. But I do know that you made a bargain nobody on earth could carry out. Here you are several thousand miles from San Francisco, and you promise to have a five-hundred-foot pier, an electric-light plant and a water-works going in thirty days. And you tell me you've bought the whole coffee-crop. My God, what did you mean?"

Angela laughed. "Just what I said. Except that I haven't bought the coffee-crop yet. Mr. Hinderwick knows better. But he knows I will try to buy it. But we can have everything else done before the thirty days are up."

Simms gazed at her and then went on: "To-morrow they will have the contract drawn up. You will have to sign a bond for its fulfillment. Better give up this trade now, up anchor and away. They can't do anything to you then."

She frowned. "I intend to carry it out."

"But how?" demanded the exasperated Simms. "Can't you see that you played into Hinderwick's hand? He knows you can't carry out the contract. Why—I wish I knew the reason for your suddenly taking the tack you did. You passed Hinderwick—the real man of affairs—right up and went for Don Antonio. You can't trust him. He will throw you down."

"Will he?" she returned. "I think not. He is a man who has risen from obscurity by his own efforts. He has a lot of pride. He has more than that—he will choose Angela Barstow rather than Edwin Hinderwick."

"But how will you manage to do all this you've promised?" the Captain insisted.

Angela smiled.

WITH all due ritual, the powers of Verdad two days later took up the matter of the building of a pier at San Luis. Angela Barstow for the Southern Mail sealed and delivered her offer, and it was accepted with the proviso that in case of failure of her company to fulfill the terms of the contract she was to forfeit the sum of one million dollars.

"I congratulate you, Miss Barstow," Hinderwick said with a smile when the formalities were over.

"I'll claim your compliments in thirty days," she returned languidly.

To Don Antonio Rival she made a quiet announcement: "I am leaving Captain Simms here in San Luis as my representative."

To the outraged Simms himself she emphasized her commands. "I know exactly what you wish to tell me," she told him. "But you are under my orders. Your chief officer, Mr. Marcus, can handle the *Equator* perfectly well. You will stay here, keep your temper and see to it that Hinderwick doesn't take steps to upset the arrangement."

Israel Simms, struggling with his feelings, made inarticulate sounds. Angela drew him into the chart-room, where a survey-map of the harbor of San Luis was spread on the table. She put her finger-tip on an indentation in the shore-line.

"There is eighteen feet here at high water," she pointed out. "It is the place I shall build the pier. I want you to see to it that from the shore end of this little bight the electric-light poles are erected throughout the town—clear to the palace. And keep that bay clear. It is where the Southern Steam Packet expect to build *their* pier. I want it kept absolutely free from obstructions. I expect you to convince Don Antonio that the lights will be shining on all his boulevards and in his great ballroom thirty nights from this."

"They will hang me," Simms muttered. "You don't know what you are promising. To get the material, the machinery, the workmen and the construction done in that time would cost ten millions—if it could be done at any price."

Angela frowned. "Thirty nights from to-night!"

Simms nodded gloomily. "I'll stick here, all right. But the only place you can get the material, the dynamos, the pumps and the structural steel is in San Pedro—eight days' fast steaming across the gulf and up the coast. Say sixteen days! You can't—it is madness!"

To Marcus, freshly promoted after years of dull toil as chief officer, Simms spoke in the blunt fashion of their calling.

"She's clean gone out of her head. Put to sea and steam for San Francisco as fast as you can. Once there, turn her over to Captain Matthews. Forget me. I'll be here on the spot. They can't do anything to me that would hurt half as much as getting the little lady into trouble would."

Marcus nodded. "I understand. I'll head for the Golden Gate. As I take it, she has to go as far as San Pedro anyway, to get her stuff. Well and good. To the devil with the freight."

Captain Marcus rubbed his close-cropped gray head as he continued: "You'll follow out your instructions, of course?"

"I have no choice," Simms returned bitterly. "She's already arranged with the *Presidente* to wire the palace and install the lamps, and it's up to me to go ahead. Hinderwick will see that I do. She's even made me promise to build a freight-shed alongside that little channel and fill it with coffee. She's sealed, signed and delivered the Southern Mail into Hinderwick's hands. And the first ship of ours that pokes its nose into San Luis when the fiasco is over, will be seized and held to enforce the payment of the million dollars she has sworn to pay into the treasury of Verdad. Oh, it's going to be a fine farce!"

To Angela's final instructions and warnings Simms returned only a brief: "I'll see to it."

"By the way," she concluded, "I'd be rather particular, if I were you, about the palace wiring and the lamps. Don Antonio is going to give a state dinner the night of the thirtieth day—to me. All Verdad will be there."

"It surely will," Simms acknowledged. "But some of us won't be. We'll be in jail."

Miss Barstow flipped a big envelope

into Simms' hands. "Your instructions in detail," she said. "Now good-by."

An hour later Israel Simms watched the smoke of the *Equator* streaming out along the horizon.

"Why doesn't Marcus head north?" he muttered, the sweat pouring down his face.

The steamer held her course to the southward.

TWENTY-EIGHT days had elapsed since Angela Barstow had sailed away on the *Equator*. In all that interminable period Israel Simms had heard no word of his mistress. So far as he knew, no one in the little republic of Verdad had received any hint of what had become of the head of the Southern Mail—unless it was Hinderwick!

But Simms had kept a gallant front to the enemy. With a sick heart and an expressionless face he had proceeded to follow out his superior's commands. He had built a warehouse along the edge of the narrow channel where the pier was to be erected out into the deeper bay. He had raised his poles and strung the wires. He had superintended the building of a small dam across the little river that brought fresh water down from the hills, and he had stolidly proceeded to lay mains through the unpaved streets, clear to the big palace grounds.

Yet the test of his fidelity had been almost too great when the smiling Hinderwick, only five days before the thirty-day term was up, had sent him a brief communication ordering the erection of a large fountain in the main courtyard under the banquet-hall windows.

"His Excellency believes that this fountain should play on the night of the completion of the glorious project fostered by the Southern Mail," Hinderwick's florid secretary had written.

With curses too deep for expression, Simms duly connected the new affair with his empty mains.

And now, on the last morning, the sea was clear. There was no sign of any steamer off the coast. No word had been brought by any visitor, of Angela Barstow or the *Equator*. All would be over at midnight. Simms felt a great burden roll from his shoulders. He

turned with almost a grin to meet Hinderwick's mocking eyes.

"The *Presidente* has commanded the grand dinner for ten o'clock to-night," the secretary of foreign affairs remarked. "Everything is ready. The citizens of San Luis will await the turning on of the electricity and the playing of the fountain at midnight. The treasurer will collect the million dollars. You are ready, Captain Simms?"

Israel turned a triumphant face on his tormentor. "I shall be ready at midnight," he answered.

Hinderwick stared out at the empty bay, at the warehouse, at the workmen lounging around a few useless derricks set in a straight row on the muddy border of the shore. He glanced musingly at Simms. Then he laughed.

"What a glorious bluff!" he murmured.

"Heh?" said Simms.

"His Excellency will not see the joke—nor will you, my friend," Hinderwick went on lazily.

WHEN he was gone, strolling among his chatting group of officials, Simms laughed.

"Anyway, Angela Barstow is safe." He stared out once more at the empty sea. "My landscape will be from the window of a prison to-morrow," he murmured. "And I don't give a whoop."

A long day passed; the horizon was unmarked by a feather of smoke.

"All over but the conclusion to-night," Simms said to himself at sundown. "Thank God!" He stretched his arms over his head in a final gesture of relief. His triumphant eyes glowed. Let Hinderwick laugh! Let the Steam Packet people have their concession, and let the treasury try to collect their million! A foolish, adorable and lovely girl would not see the catastrophe. She was safe in San Francisco.

His hands fell to his sides swiftly, his eyes fixed on a little blob of smoke on the horizon. He almost sobbed in his agony. It was the *Equator* steaming in from the free seas, steaming in to make a holiday for Hinderwick. Angela! Simms bowed his head on his breast. He knew what would happen.

Far uptown he heard the tramp and bustle of Don Antonio Rival's ragged soldiery. In his mind's eyes he saw the girl he would so gladly have saved at the cost of his own life made a prisoner before the mocking Hinderwick.

"And the man would see her insulted by these natives rather than lose a bit of his profit," he said bitterly. He fumbled for his revolver and compressed his lips. "He won't live to see his victory," he muttered.

DARKNESS fell, and a half-dozen miles out from San Luis the lights of an incoming steamer flashed and sparkled. At the head of the little channel where he had built his sheds and to which he had brought his electric cables and the junction of his useless water-mains Israel Simms stood and waited. He dared not take boat and go out to meet the *Equator* and give warning. He knew perfectly well that Hinderwick was having him watched. But there would be time when the steamer anchored. At all hazards, Angela must not step foot on shore.

Then he realized that he was alone. The fiasco was so plain that Hinderwick had not thought it worth his while to await the *dénouement*. He was up at the palace, preparing for the feast that was to celebrate the downfall of the Southern Mail.

Slowly the big steamer lost headway and swung broadside to the shore. Her anchor thundered down. Lights shone along the rail, and almost immediately a small boat put off for the shore.

"Good old Marcus," he thought. "After leaving Angela in a safe place, he's come for me. I sha'n't go. I promised her I wouldn't—but it's good of Marcus!"

The boat swung in swiftly, divided the smooth waters of the little bay and swung smartly alongside the landing where Simms stood. A couple of neatly uniformed sailors leaped out. One of them held a lantern above his head. Simms' eyes nearly started out of his head.

Angela Barstow stepped out on the planks. She was dressed in a gown so magnificent, a gown which set her beauty off to such an advantage, that

the man who had thought her thousands of miles away found no words.

"You see, Captain Simms," she said quietly, "I am ready for the banquet."

SIMMS found his voice. "Go back!" he croaked. "This is no banquet; it's a funeral."

Angela turned to a waiting sailor and said clearly: "Tell Captain Marcus everything is ready." She fixed her steady eyes on Simms. "You have everything ready—wires, mains, freight in the shed?"

"All ready," he responded thickly. "But it's Hinderwick's freight in the sheds."

Angela waved her hand, and the boat pushed off and was lost in the darkness.

"Now for the banquet," she murmured.

Presently Simms found his tongue. But his companion refused to listen. "It is all arranged," she said. "Where is my carriage?"

Like a man in a dream, Simms summoned an equipage and gave the order: "To the palace!" Then he muttered: "Hinderwick will laugh."

"Will he?" she murmured. "How nice of him!"

"But what is going to be done?" the Captain burst out. "You don't seem to understand that you've played right into their hands."

Angela laughed, leaning back in the carriage, her eyes starry with pleasure. "Don't be a bore," she responded. "This is our feast."

On the broad steps of the old palace Simms turned and glanced out across the bay. A horrified ejaculation burst from his lips.

"Oh! the *Equator* steaming from her anchorage?" Angela said placidly. "Captain Marcus is obeying orders."

"Thank God for my revolver," Simms muttered, and threw up his head to meet the mocking, wicked and triumphant gaze of the Honorable F. Edwin Hinderwick.

As they entered the spacious room Don Antonio Rival's glittering eyes narrowed. He did not move. He seemed to be suddenly turned to stone. Angela met those ominous eyes boldly. She paid no attention to Hinderwick, who

was stepping forward under the many lights of the candelabra. Her clear voice rang out imperiously.

"You pay me little courtesy, Your Excellency."

Don Antonio's face lighted up. He stepped forward from amid his suite of brightly clad officers and bowed over her hand.

"You are our honored guest, Miss Barstow," he murmured. "We were told you would not honor us to-night."

"I have come to claim my rights under my concession," she said.

"At midnight?" he responded civilly.

"At midnight I shall have fulfilled my bargain," she declared. "Meanwhile, I am your guest. At midnight you shall be my guest."

Don Antonio's face quivered slightly. "A battleship!" he said in a level voice.

Angela smiled. "No."

True soldier of fortune that he was, the *Presidente* lifted his head and answered her smile. Then he offered his arm. A band struck up a march. The great hangings across a doorway slipped back and disclosed the glittering banquet hall, lighted by hundreds of huge candles.

At half past eleven o'clock Captain Simms unobtrusively slid his chair back and felt for his revolver. The hall had fallen silent. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was on his feet. He was reciting in a dry, official voice the terms of the contract which the Southern Mail had entered into with the Republic of Verdad. Don Antonio sat in his chair of state, his dark and impassive countenance inscrutable.

And as the businesslike details of the project which was to be accomplished at the stroke of twelve made their meaning clear, Simms foresaw the finish. It would be himself single-handed against Verdad. The *Equator* was gone.

"And now," said Hinderwick, bringing his formal recital to a close, "His Excellency awaits the fulfillment of the contract."

OUT of the corner of his eye Israel Simms caught sight of a familiar figure and breathed a sigh of relief. Marcus had entered, in full uniform, his gray old face expressing an odd,

unaccountable complacency. Simms glanced at the great ornate clock on the wall. It was five minutes of midnight.

Angela rose languidly. She faced Don Antonio.

"For my great company I accept the concessions offered by the glorious republic and its gallant head, Don Antonio Rival. The term of our agreement is finished. At midnight the free citizens of this magnificent land shall hail their president no longer as Don Antonio, but as San Antonio. For he it is who has given them light, prosperity and an ever-to-increase commerce with the United States." She lifted her glass slowly, her eyes fixed on the *Presidente*.

"To Verdad!" she cried.

Above them boomed out the deep tones of bells announcing the hour of twelve. And while the clangor still echoed in the hall, a sudden radiance glowed up. The candles dimmed. The empty globes that hung at every possible point threw their glare downward.

His eyes wide at the miracle, Don Antonio rose, glass in hand.

"To Verdad!" he shouted amid the growing tumult.

For the moment Hinderwick seemed thunderstruck. He slipped to a window and drew back the curtain. The town glowed with lights. He dashed back and raised his voice.

"The lights are not enough! There is water to be supplied!"

At a sign from Angela, Captain Marcus rose and went to another window and drew its curtain back too. Sparkling to the glare of many lights, the fountain threw its jets up into the air.

"Marcus!" Simms whispered in his old friend's ear. "How did it happen?"

MARCUS grinned. "Ran down to Balboa, loaded everything needed on the *Equator*, installed new dynamos on her, rigged the main pumps to an outboard intake, reconstructed the whole inside of the ship and ran her aground up that channel; opened the sea-cocks, put the main engines permanently out of commission and hooked up to your cables and mains. There's your pier, right up to specifications.

Not a thing missing. And the loading is going on now."

"Loading *what*?" demanded Simms.

"The *Verdad*," Marcus responded.

"Our old *Commodore*, renamed at sea. Came into the harbor at eleven, berthed alongside the old *Equator*, which has eight hundred tons of cement in her hold to hold her to the bottom, took off hatches and will have twelve hundred tons of coffee stowed by daylight. Quick work, Captain! We'd ha' been down and out if you hadn't done your part here. The little lady swore she could depend on you. And here we are, with pier built, electric plant running, fresh water being pumped into the mains and—"

Hinderwick was on his feet.

"There is one condition of the contract yet unfulfilled," he said dryly. "As Minister of State, I am unable to abate a single condition laid down by our noble senate and approved by His Excellency. One million dollars is due the treasury."

Don Antonio nodded his head significantly. The assembly fell silent. Angela Barstow smiled.

"Mr. Hinderwick, as the owner of six million dollars' worth of coffee purchased within the past three weeks for the account of the Southern Steam Packet, will pay his own check into the treasury of Verdad for the sum of one million dollars for the privilege of trading through the port of San Luis."

Don Antonio Rival bowed slightly. "That is right," he announced in an even voice. "As concessionaire, you have the authority to make what terms you like." He turned on Mr. Hinderwick. "Your check," he said distinctly.

And while the Honorable F. Edwin Hinderwick stared at the mocking lights glittering above him Israel Simms thrust his revolver farther down in his pocket.

"Cæsar must have been some person," he murmured.

"I don't understand," Marcus returned.

"Neither does Don Antonio," was the answer. "He probably never heard of Cleopatra."

Another of Mr. Wilson's stories of the inimitable Angela Barstow will appear in an early issue.

Alias Mrs. Blair Coulter

A Continued Story

By Henry M. Neely



CHAPTER I

THE men who write books telling writers how they ought to write point with suspicious unanimity to the first chapter of Job as the model upon which all authors should pattern the beginnings of their stories. Taking, for once, the advice of these experts:

There was a woman in the suburbs of Philadelphia whose name was Mrs. Daniel Creedon.

But there the pattern must be dropped, for Mrs. Creedon, it must be confessed, had long ago sneered her way beyond the fear recommended in the passage, and while she technically eschewed evil, it was only because she maintained herself in an isolation so complete that both good and evil passed her by without trying to tempt her.

She was a woman upon whom Fate had bestowed her superlative best, physically, and her unparalleled worst in the ordinary luck of life.

In her whole twenty-five years Alice Creedon had never known a perfect happiness. But those same twenty-five years had brought her such a succession of tragedies of the spirit that now, at the very time when her wonderful beauty should have loaded her shimmering brown hair with garlands of countless triumphs, she found herself, instead, almost crushed under the burdens of her pitiful failures.

Hers was the type of radiant loveliness that made even settled family men gasp and pause on the street to look again. Yet—and she herself was painfully conscious of all this—that second look gave them once more the power to breathe easily and to resume their

methodical way for the five-forty-five train. They had thought to touch the dainty skirts of Romance, but they found that the drab gingham of their own kitchens were better, after all.

For Alice Creedon's young eyes were hard and proud and repellent, and her young lips were habitually drawn into a straight, taut line that excellently symbolized her spirit, stretched almost to the snapping-point. With the lithe, fine body of a goddess and the warm, rich coloring of a sultan's dream, she was yet only the resplendent husk of a woman in whom the soul had shriveled and died.

The Creedon place on the Main Line was one of the few that really deserved to be called estates. With the vast wealth of which he was master, Daniel Creedon had built a palace. And his palace proved to be the magnificent marble mausoleum for the dead soul of his wife.

In the echoing emptinesses of the great halls and the cavernous apartments, the body of Alice Creedon maintained its vigil over this dead soul. The mourning period passed. Time was when she had contrived to feel sorry for herself, when she had gone back in her memory to the girl that she once was and had gazed from that viewpoint with infinite pity upon the woman she had turned out to be.

But that time was gone.

But—and she recognized the fact almost with unbelief—in the past few months she had caught the tinge of warmer blood in her cheeks; she had seen once or twice the flash of a poor little smile in her mirrored eyes and she had surprised a relaxing of the grim line of her lips into a hint of the



alluring fullness of curve that Nature had intended them to have. The soul that she had thought dead was stirring.

Freedom, from him! Freedom from Daniel Creedon!

UNDER threat of exposures that would forever render him loathsome to his fellow-man, she had forced him to go away for the two years necessary for divorce on the non-scandalous grounds of desertion, and now the interminable two years were drawing to a close.

Day by day, as the time of her emancipation came nearer, she caught that stirring of the soul she had thought dead and that stronger pulsing of the blood that she had thought sodden and cold. Freedom from him!

And now, with the dawn of her liberty almost upon her, she sat on the balcony outside her bedroom, the warm breath of a perfect May day calling her to join in the riot of springtime revelry, the choral of budding Nature clamoring to her to live—live! But the soul that had stirred shivered and fell back upon its bier; the smile that had softened the deep brown of her eyes fled and left them again hard and cold and repellent.

Up from the letter that had fallen

from her nerveless fingers the words leaped and shrieked at her in derision:

You must stop this divorce business at once. You do not understand, but I am coming back to show you a better way. Expect me within a few days.

She sat there dully, stupidly. All about her was unfolded the wonderful drama of Nature in its reawakening, of new lives being born, of old lives being renewed, revived, starting up afresh from the long, silent slumber of the snowclad months.

Color and rush and bustle, gay song and swift motion and sweet scents, joy—joy everywhere!

But she sat there dully, stupidly.

She heard her maid stir in the room, and the sound started her into consciousness. Instantly the hard eyes changed. They changed swiftly to panic. They changed to the wide-open staring of a nameless dread, of a horror too awful for silent inactivity.

"Marie!" she called.

Her voice was a choked whisper. The sound of it seemed to add to her terror. She sprang to her feet. The letter fluttered to the tiled floor of the balcony.

"Marie!"

Marie came quickly. She found her mistress clutching the back of the chair for support. The wide eyes were fixed

upon the bit of paper where it danced in the breeze. The eyes were stark and stupid with dread.

"Marie. You must pack quickly. Hurry! Hurry!"

But Marie did not move. She too stood staring at the bit of paper fluttering in the springtime breeze. It seemed that she understood. For the long years that she had faithfully served—through her mistress' starved girlhood, through the tragedy of the loveless marriage, through the heaped-on humiliations of a dishonored wifehood, through the almost two years of hope against the day of ultimate freedom—the years had given to Marie the insight to understand. At length she found the power to move her lips.

"Pack? for both of us?"

"No, no! For me. Just a few things—for a week—until I get settled somewhere. I will send you word. Only a suit-case. But hurry. He is coming back!"

ALL Philadelphia is divided into two parts—the Texler-Langwells and the others. To be born a Texler or a Langwell is to have one's position in life unassailably fixed. To be born one of the others is to enter upon a career of strife and turmoil and worry which may, indeed, bring rewards magnificent enough in themselves—but they never make one a Texler or a Langwell.

In Philadelphia one is permitted to know a Texler or a Langwell personally but never intimately. Of Mendellian necessity, Texlers and Langwells submit to marrying other men and women, but these men and women remain to the end of their days merely the husbands and wives of Texlers or Langwells; they are never allowed to be considered really Texlers or Langwells themselves.

When William Penn laid out his City of Brotherly Love, he discovered that the entire seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth wards were already owned by Elias Texler. Elias was a canny old scoundrel who was almost, if not quite, the originator of the popular colonial pastime of swindling the Indian; and the game, as perfected by him, has been continued ever since by his descendants—though of course the Indians long ago

yielded their places to the general run of small investors.

The original Langwell, who rejoiced in the given name of Roger, was the first who was shrewd enough to detect a lack of thoroughness in Elias Texler's methods. His investigations showed him that, though Texler did succeed in getting the land, he carelessly permitted the Indian to retreat into the outlying country with much personal property that was easily and profitably convertible. So Roger Langwell followed the Indian and took from him even that which he had.

With their business interests so closely allied, it was only natural that these two worthies should take measures to assure permanent centralization of control, and lacking the corporation laws that have since been devised to protect their kind, they surmounted the difficulty by promoting the marriage of all sons and daughters and nieces and nephews of Texler to sons and daughters and nieces and nephews of Langwell.

And so Philadelphia society was founded.

MRS. DANIEL CREEDON'S maiden name was Alice Langwell Texler. Further than that toward deity no human being could go, except, perhaps, one of her dissolute cousins who signed himself Langwell Texler-Langwell. His mother had been a Langwell, his father a Texler. His father had died, and his mother had married another Langwell. And he, seeing the Olympian preëminence to which it would raise him, had hyphenated the names while even Texlers and Langwells gasped at his audacity and envied him his good fortune in having such considerate parents.

Alice Texler must have been a reversion in heredity, for her entire girlhood showed that her personality was totally at variance with the family traditions.

She was a child of warm affections, of strong loves and hates, of simply human emotions and sympathies. She had never known the father, who died while she was a baby, and her mother was temperamentally so entirely of the

old school that Alice's evolution left Mrs. Texler dazed and unable to cope with the problems the child presented.

Money would have given Mrs. Texler the means to engage tutors and governesses to relieve her of worry over the child. But the fate which had endowed her with the purest strain of the family blood played her the scurvy trick of giving her none of the family fortune to support it.

Consequently upon the death of her husband, Mrs. Texler found herself with the gloomy old family house and the vivacious and full-blooded young Alice both upon her hands and without the money to keep either looking anything more than genteelly shabby.

She herself at once retired into a sedate and listless state of partial coma. She lived altogether in her memories and solved the problems of the hurrying years by the simple expedient of refusing to face them at all, of simply letting the house decay and the daughter develop as best they could so long as they did not force themselves too strongly upon her attention.

She had a small income grudgingly allowed to her by a brother, not for any love he felt for her, but simply because the family could not permit the public scandal of a starving Langwell. This income was sufficient to clothe her in the unostentatious and inexpensive old-fashioned mourning which she at once and forever adopted; and this income maintained the modest table and the three slipshod servants who were as shabby as the ancient house itself.

Of these the shabbiest of all was gloomy old Margaret, Mrs. Texler's maid. Margaret's mother had been maid to Mrs. Texler's mother; Margaret's daughter Marie was to be maid to Miss Alice. It was delightfully simple. As Alice grew from strenuous babyhood into gawkish girlhood, it became apparent that she must have a maid of some sort. It was equally apparent that Mrs. Texler could not be annoyed by the irritating duty of finding one for her, and so old Margaret's suggestion was at once adopted, and Marie, scarcely less gawkish and only two years older than Alice, was inducted into the household.

AT the age of twelve Alice Texler was all legs and feet and hands and arms. Her knees and ankles, her wrists and elbows, were bony protuberances that refused to be hidden, and she was so loose-jointed that she could not even walk down the long, dark hallway without knocking into something against the wall. She was the despair of her mother, but she seemed not to notice it at all herself.

There was no hint of the beauty that was to develop later. Only in the fathomless depths of her warm brown eyes and in the alluring curve of her full lips could one see even a suggestion of the dazzling attractions to come.

In the earliest dawn of her intelligence the first fact that loomed up tangibly out of the mists was that her mother must not be disturbed except when it was absolutely necessary. Childish dilemmas of course arose, and they had to be cleared away by a maturer wisdom than Alice possessed, but the routine was always the same; the little girl and her dilemmas were turned over to the ancient Margaret, while Mrs. Texler heaved a deep sigh at having to bear such burdens and went back to her dreams and her well-thumbed Thackeray.

So Alice came to see that she must not be so inconsiderate as to disturb her mother, and disliking the gloomy and unsympathetic attitude of old Margaret, she came at a most precocious age to the habit of solving her own problems for herself.

Alice was sent to the cheapest day-school that was fit for a Texler or a Langwell to attend, and she was given for her own use the great, bare room on the rear of the fourth floor; and beyond requiring that she be immediately available at meal-times, her family proceeded, so far as possible, to forget the annoyance of having to have her about.

But she was not about much. With the advent of Marie, her horizon broadened and she learned what she had so often suspected—that there were other people in the world besides Texlers and Langwells, people much more human, much more interesting, even fascinating, and almost thrilling.

She took Marie to her bosom with an affection that held nothing in reserve. With the discovery of a mutual love of stories of adventure and brave deeds and knights and ladies and all the glittering panoply of romance, the relations of mistress and maid were at once dropped, and they spent long hours together, curled up crosslegged on the old haircloth sofa in the nursery, first one and then the other reading aloud from the books Marie obtained from a library.

The impression that these tales made upon them was vivid and lasting. It must be confessed that many of the books upon which they hit haphazard were not at all suitable for their tender years. Yet curiously enough, this omnivorous reading, with the vivid reality of its impressions, brought to their young perceptions a quite keen sense of certain differences between right and wrong.

They learned that beautiful women were regarded by all villains as legitimate prey, though their ideas of the exact nature of the objects of the chase were vague and hazy. They learned that love was the one priceless gift that life could bestow, and that for it women should sacrifice to the uttermost. They learned that all men who came wooing were by no means to be accepted at their face value, and they came to the rather safe conclusion that men who wooed with honeyed words and too many flowery protestations were, in all probability, villains laying careful traps for some indefinite reason or other, to win a maiden away from the less eloquent but far more worthy hero.

Thus they came to a fairly accurate knowledge of the theory of life, while knowing nothing of its realities. And presently their early love of the romances of knights and ladies gave place to a passion for stories of the modern school, to narratives of such men and women as they saw upon the streets about them. They recognized the piquant charm of translations from the French and these they devoured breathlessly, with many naïve speculations over the passages that were to them recondite and mysterious, but that would have been to a mature reader

almost shockingly bald and frank in the presentation of topics usually avoided in ordinary conversations.

Alice and Marie did not know that these topics were avoided. They saw them presented with such brilliancy of dialogue upon the pages of their books and discussed with such a charming fluency of style by the authors that they quite adopted the style themselves. Had Mrs. Texler, by chance, overheard a conversation between the two girls, there is no doubt that—when she had sufficiently recovered to think at all—she would have concluded that her daughter's soul was irretrievably lost.

ALICE made no friends among the other girls who attended her school. They all seemed to her so insipid and flat and affected. She was quite familiar with their type through her reading. They were the kind of girls who always grew into women who were never more than minor characters in a story. So she gave them up and clung passionately to Marie. Marie understood her. Marie saw life as she saw it, thought about it as she thought, discussed it in the same terms.

They formed the habit of going out into Rittenhouse Square on sunny afternoons after school and sitting on a bench and watching the men and women who passed. The Square, to them, was a stage upon which, for their own especial benefit, living characters strode back and forth, acting their parts in the human drama that so intensely fascinated them. They formed the habit of analyzing these actors and of speculating upon the plots in which they were taking part. A beautiful woman with sad eyes suggested at once the pathos of blighted love, and they figuratively hugged her to their bosoms.

"She's unhappy; there's no doubt about that," Marie declared.

"And it's because of love, of course," Alice supplemented.

"She has on a wedding-ring."

"Oh, yes. Then it is perfectly simple. Her husband doesn't understand her. He is probably a brute."

"Then she ought to go away with her lover. I suppose she has a lover."

"Of course! A beautiful woman like

that always has. I wonder if she would be angry if we asked her."

And so the two girls thrived and grew, and to what this manner of life might have led them no man can say. But it was stopped quite abruptly by the incident of Luigi Compolo and grim old Uncle Elias Texler.

CHAPTER II

IT was Marie who discovered Luigi, but it was Alice who claimed him at once. They were sitting upon their favorite bench one deliciously warm spring afternoon. From far across the Square they heard the notes of a hand-organ, but nothing so trivial as that could for a moment take their breathless attention from the wonderful sight they were watching.

It was a fashionable wedding in Holy Trinity Church. They had seen the last of the guests go in. The doors had been closed, and only a stray wisp of music filtered out to the girls now and again. But they waited patiently. They waited until the doors opened and the bridal couple came out and stepped into the big limousine that chugged away. Then the two girls broke their ecstatic silence to weave their little plot, totally ignoring all the elegantly dressed guests who came from the church in attitudes that seemed to betoken an inner sense of some importance in the world.

But they were of no importance whatever to the two girls upon the bench.

"Do you think she really loves him?" Alice demanded.

"No." There was no indecision in Marie's tone. "She couldn't possibly love him. I saw him perfectly, and I didn't like him a bit."

Alice mused a moment.

"I wonder how they forced her to marry him. I wonder if she's terribly miserable and heartbroken. But of course she is. She'd have to be."

"And now,"—Marie's eyes were fixed dreamily on space,—“now she'll have to go away, and the hero won't be able to see her until she comes back and her husband goes to his office.”

"I don't think this man has an office.

He looks tremendously rich. He'll go to his club to drink and gamble, and then the hero can see her."

"And the husband will come home drunk and mad because he's lost a million francs at cards—"

"And the hero will have to hurry out through the casement window—"

"And the husband will find something that he has left—his cane or his gloves—"

"Or his collar-button. You remember, *Ramon Duvall* dropped his collar-button, and *Elise's* husband found it, and how simply furious he was?"

THE hand-organ music began again. And suddenly Marie whispered: "Oh, Alice, look at his soulful eyes."

And Alice looked. She looked into eyes that flashed fire. She looked into eyes that swam. She looked into eyes that melted and blazed and then let their soul sink deep—deep—deeper than any depths that she had imagined eyes could have.

They were the eyes of the Italian lad who, hat in hand, approached them from the direction of the jangling organ. From the habit of many days he stood thus in mercenary petition, but in his eyes there was nothing of the suppliant. They met the slowly raised eyes of Alice Texler. They burned deeply into the deep brown depths of her own; they probed mercilessly and they withdrew, bringing her secret with them.

To her it meant nothing that he was shabbily clothed. She was shabbily clothed herself. She had always been shabbily clothed. To her it meant nothing that he ground an organ and begged, cap in hand, for pennies. Some of the most delightful of her fictional heroes had been poor—pitifully poor. She herself was pitifully poor. The thing that thrilled her was the soul. She was sure it was a soul. No eyes could so swiftly flash and swim and melt into fathomless depths unless they had a soul behind them. And she sat abashed before him.

Marie came to her rescue with a polite: "I'm very sorry, but we didn't bring our purses with us." True, they had no purses, but the phrase sounded smooth and ladylike, and it served to

bring Alice to a sense of the reality about her. She saw the black eyes relax and smile down at her.

"You verra grand-a lady—no?" he asked in a voice that was as soft and rich and musical as the notes of a 'cello. "You leeve in da beeg-a house on Pine Street?"

She nodded, wondering if this soul-mate had loved her long in silence and in secrecy. They did that often in the books she read.

"But I'm not really a grand lady," she said, "—that is, not very grand."

He smiled again.

"I see you two—t'ree time," he said. "You leeve in da verra grand-a house. I see you gone in two—t'ree time."

So he knew who she was! He had watched her! Had watched her, perhaps, with the love-light burning in his eyes, and she had not known it!

She looked at him, utterly spellbound with the magic of it. Again Marie came to her rescue with a repeated regret that they had left their purses behind them. He was all glittering smiles. He bowed and shrugged in his expressive Latin way, as though the financial phase were the least important part of his meeting with them.

"Mebbe t'morr'," he said, "mebbe t'morr' you breeng da nickel—da dime—eh?"

They said yes, to-morrow they would certainly bring a dime, and he smiled again and bowed and was gone.

THEY watched him rejoin the older man, who had finished turning the weary crank of the organ. They watched him take the strap and help tow the lumbering contraption away until it rounded the corner of the church, and then he looked back and took off his cap and waved it gayly to them while his white teeth flashed in another of his brilliant smiles.

The second day following they saw him again; and they gave him their dime. They had got the dime by their very first business transaction—the sale of an old pair of shoes that Alice had outgrown, to a colored woman who raised eight children and considerable trouble in the little street that flanked the rear of the Pine Street mansions.

And the two girls talked to the Italian. While the older man rested under the shade of a tree, Luigi sat upon the bench with them and talked to them in his pretty Italian dialect, while his eyes looked unutterable things into the deep brown eyes of this daughter of the Texlers and his smile beamed upon mistress and maid with a most engaging impartiality.

He confessed that organ-grinding was not the career that he had chosen for himself. He wanted to play the violin, to go to Europe and study with the great masters, and then—ah, then they should see the artist!

They listened spellbound as he talked. He had a violin, he said, and he played as his soul dictated—entirely without lessons, without other guide than the divine spirit that coursed through him whenever he took the bow in his hands. They should see! Some day he would bring his violin to their very grand house on Pine Street, and they should hear him play.

But ah! if he could go to Europe and study!

It was then that Alice thought of her grim old Uncle Elias. She had heard that Uncle Elias had spent fabulous sums of money in sending poor young men and women to Europe to study art or music. She would take Luigi to him and explain it all, and then Luigi would play, and old Uncle Elias, swept into uncontrollable enthusiasm by the wonderful genius of the lad, would—

True, Alice had never met Uncle Elias; but she was his own niece, his brother's daughter; and in spite of the terrifying things she had heard about the crabbed old man and his crotchety temper, she felt that the claim of the genius of Luigi would make him overlook for the moment his notorious hatred of all Langwells and Texlers.

But this reported hatred did not terrify her. She would take Luigi to him. They talked of it several afternoons, and Luigi's white teeth gleamed in his radiant smile, and the fire blazed out in his eyes, and he stood proud and erect and straightened his fine young shoulders until Alice Texler thought that in all the realm of romance there had never been such a hero as Luigi.

THEY went to see Uncle Elias on a Sunday directly after the old-fashioned midday dinner. They met Luigi with his tattered violin-box at their favorite bench in Rittenhouse Square, and they walked with him over to Spruce Street and out beyond Twentieth until they stopped in front of the old house whose very drab dinginess proclaimed it the home of a Philadelphia blue-blood. No one else would have dared live in such a dingy old house.

For Uncle Elias was certainly a blue-blood, even if he had been born of the poorer branch of the family, and even if he had developed a business genius such as no one else in the family, since the time of his ancient namesake, had had. He had made all of his own great fortune. And he boasted that he had made it without swindling anybody—that is, not anybody that he knew very well.

It was a solemn-faced and unbending manservant who opened the door to them, and he was for closing it again at once in their faces when he saw their Sunday-best shoddiness, but Alice pushed past him and said, with all the dignity with which great ladies spoke in her storybooks: "Tell Mr. Texler that it is his niece, Miss Alice Texler."

And they walked into a dim and darkened front parlor such as no one but a Philadelphia blue-blood could have endured.

The manservant stood and gasped at them two or three times, and then he seemed on the point of calling another servant to watch the bric-a-brac while he went for his master, but finally he shrugged in a way that showed he was trying his best to get used to this sort of thing. Then he disappeared.

Uncle Elias came to them finally. He came shuffling down the long hallway and into the room without a word, and without a word he stood in the double doors and peered through the gloom at their three very shadowy figures huddled down into the depths of great carved chairs. Then he pattered over to the front windows and raised a blind to let in a great, brazen flood of Sunday sunlight in which the dust-flecks from the floor danced and scintillated.

"Now," he said in a rasping voice

that was for all the world like sandpaper, "now which of you three is my niece? Come here till I look at you."

ALICE came forward and stood in front of him, full in the blaze of sunlight. Her great brown eyes looked up steadily into his. She was perfectly poised, perfectly calm, perfectly unafraid.

"Are you Alice Texler?" he asked.

"Yes sir."

"My brother's daughter?"

"Yes sir."

"H'mm!"

He mused a moment with his thin lips pursed and his great, shaggy brows wrinkled down ominously over the two little darts of cold fire that were his eyes.

"You're shabby," he said finally, "damnably shabby. Why doesn't your mother dress you better?"

Alice did not flush. She did not feel that it was an insult. It was only one of those personal questions that older people have a habit of asking.

"Why doesn't she?" he repeated.

"I don't know, Uncle Elias," she said. "You see, my mother's brother takes care of us."

"I see. And your father's brother doesn't—eh? Well, he wont. They needn't have sent you to me."

"Nobody sent me to you," she said, still in her even, unannoyed voice. "I think they'd be too much afraid."

A keen, grim smile of glee flashed across his sharp features.

"Afraid, eh?" he repeated with a little cackle. "They're afraid of me, are they?"

"Well, perhaps not *afraid* exactly. But you do not seem to be particularly popular with them."

"Ah-ha! So you've heard that, have you? You've heard that I hate the whole damned crew of upstarts?"

"No sir—that is, I did not hear that they were a damned crew of upstarts. They never said that. Perhaps you have never told them."

The flash from his cold eyes shot at her colder and keener than ever.

"I wonder," he mused judiciously, "I wonder if you're trying to be impudent to me."

SHE raised her brows, and her eyes widened at the unexpectedness of his suspicion. And as she thought how funny it was, she smiled up at him. She smiled with her great brown eyes and her full young lips, with a smile that seemed suddenly to transform and beautify her whole being, that illuminated her face and spread its warm radiance everywhere.

"No, Uncle Elias—" she began, but he interrupted her.

"Wait a minute," he commanded.

He stood there looking at her, the anger suddenly gone from his frown, the coldness suddenly gone from that darting light that came from under his hairy brows.

"Did you ever see your Grandmother Paulson?" he demanded at length.

"My father's mother?"

"Yes—and my mother."

"No sir. I never saw her. She is dead, isn't she?"

"Many years ago. But I saw her again just now—when you smiled."

"You mean I am like her? I'm so glad."

"Glad, eh? Why?"

She sighed wearily.

"Because I did so hate the thought of growing up to be like nothing but a Langwell or a Texler. They are not a bit thrilling, the Langwells and Texlers. And I do so want to be thrilling."

He grunted. He seemed to do it because he could find no reply to make to a statement so startlingly unintelligible to him. He looked at her in a puzzled sort of way for a moment, and then he grunted again.

"What did you come here to-day for?" he growled. "Thrills?"

She stared a moment in unbelief, and then suddenly she burst into a gay laugh of sheer, uncontrollable joy.

"Oh, Uncle Elias!" she cried. "You are funny! Fancy being really thrilled by you!"

HE sputtered and fumed, and he looked for a time as if he were going to turn them all out of the house, but her joyous young laugh rang all of the gloom out of the dingy old room. It was irresistibly infectious. Before he knew it, he had started to smile too, but

he straightened his face the moment he realized it and quickly put on his severest frown of displeasure.

"Stop it!" he cried. "For heaven's sake, stop it! You'll have my servants laughing next, and they haven't laughed in twenty years."

She subsided slowly, but even then the little laughs bubbled up into her eyes and through her pretty lips.

"I really couldn't help it, Uncle Elias," she apologized. "It was your fault, you know. I intended to be very serious with you to-day but when you spoke of thrilling me—"

And again she laughed in spite of his petulant "Stop it!" and soon, to his own immense discomfiture, he found that he was laughing too—not laughing, perhaps, but chuckling inside of himself far enough down so that it would not show too plainly.

"Now, what is it you want?" he demanded. "You want something, of course. No one ever comes to see me unless they want something."

Instantly the mirth died, and her great eyes softened in sympathy. She put her hand on his arm, gently, understandingly.

"Oh, Uncle Elias," she said, "I'm so sorry."

That was all. They stood motionless for a long time, her hand still laid in human kindness upon his arm, her big brown eyes warm with the honest fellow-love that her low voice had spoken. He looked down at her with a suspicious pursing of his thin lips, and then he quietly put her hand away with his own.

"You are a Paulson," he said. "Now tell me all about it."

She called Luigi then, and the lad came forward with his tattered violin-case under his arm. She wished that he would not glare quite so proudly—or was it insolently?—at Uncle Elias, for she saw that the old man noticed it at once, and the hardening of his steely eyes showed that he resented it.

SHE launched at once into her story in an effort to distract her uncle's attention. She told all about their meeting with Luigi and of his ambition to be a great violinist, and she told also how

her relatives, at their somber family dinners, often complained bitterly of the fabulous sums of Texler money that he devoted to sending less worthy young aspirants to Europe to study. Uncle Elias clucked in his throat and stopped her.

"Is that what they say?" he demanded.

"Yes sir."

"H'm! I did send one young fellow to Europe."

She clasped her hands ecstatically.

"Oh, then you will send Luigi!"

He smiled grimly.

"Under the same circumstances, perhaps I would," he said. "My chauffeur ran over this fellow's father, and it was the cheapest way out of the damage-suit he threatened to bring."

She stared at him, perfectly speechless.

"Oh!" she gasped in consternation. "Oh! Then it was not because you felt that he was destined to a great career?"

"Not at all. It was because I knew he was destined to a big verdict if the case came to trial."

She let her great sorrowful eyes wander from him to the resentful Luigi and then back to him again. Then she shrugged in a perfectly calm and tearless acceptance of her fate. It was a pitiful little shrug. It showed that she was so accustomed to disappointments. It seemed to touch Uncle Elias.

"Get out your fiddle," he said to Luigi. "I'll hear how you play."

Alice felt funny little chills run up and down her body when she realized suddenly that the great moment had arrived. Luigi was going to play! And Uncle Elias was going to listen! Was going to listen, and perhaps, after all, send Luigi to Europe to begin his wonderful career!

Luigi unstrapped his tattered case and unwrapped many folds of a frayed silk scarf, bringing forth at length a pale violin that seemed somehow wizened and anemic even to her inexperienced eyes.

He clicked the strings and tightened and loosened the keys interminably and finally when he seemed satisfied that it was all in tune, he placed it under his chin and drew the bow across it.

ALICE had never heard the violin well played. She had read many, many times in her books of how violinists had held their hearers spellbound and swayed them to tears with the music of their souls. She tried now to be held spellbound and to be swayed to tears with Luigi's soul, but she found herself cold; and at times she was even conscious of gritting her teeth at some of the sounds that Luigi made.

At first, she was for putting it down to her own lack of musical education but, when she looked up at Uncle Elias and saw the agonized expression on the old man's face, her heart sank within her, for it told her very plainly and very unmistakably that her rosy dreams were not coming true. Luigi was not the wonderful genius she had thought him.

With a succession of squeezed squeaks more curdling than the rest, Luigi, oblivious of them, was mounting to his artistic climax. But he did not reach it.

With a sharply indrawn breath of positive physical pain, Uncle Elias placed the end of a thin forefinger in each ear and cried in agony: "Stop it! In God's name, stop it!"

Luigi paused in mid-stroke and looked up. What he saw made him flame suddenly scarlet, and his black eyes blazed with fury. He lowered the violin from his chin.

"My boy! My boy!" Uncle Elias cried. "Stick to your organ-grinding. I don't know how bad you are at organ-grinding, but stick to it. It is better than your fiddling will ever be."

Luigi bared his white fangs in a snarl. It was a wicked snarl, a snarl that reminded Alice of the treacherous panther she had seen at the Zoo.

"Ar-r-gh!" Luigi's fury was too carnivorous for articulate speech. The sound that he made told more plainly than words of the lust that suffused him to sink his teeth into the flesh of his tormentor. "Ar-r-gh!"

He replaced the violin in the tattered case without waiting to wrap it in the frayed, silken scarf. He cinched up the straps and tucked the thing under his arm. Then he picked up his cap and marched to the double doorway, but there he swung about suddenly and

viciously, and Alice waited for him to spring upon them. But he did not. He shook his quivering, angry fist at Uncle Elias instead.

"You dam' ol' fool!" he cried. "You dam' ol' t'ief. Wan day I come, an'—"

His lithe hand drew an imaginary stiletto from its hiding-place and deftly inserted it under the ribs of his enemy, and there, buried in the supposititious quivering flesh, he twisted it about for good measure while his eyes gleamed with the rapture of his bloody vengeance.

Suddenly he turned upon Alice, faced her in fury a moment and then figuratively spat upon her in contempt.

"Ar-r-gh!" he snarled. "You verra fine-a leddy, eh? You verra fine-a—bah!"

He turned and was gone.

CHAPTER III

IT was the sound of Uncle Elias' voice that brought Alice up from among the ruins of her dreams.

"I'm sorry, my dear, that I cannot encourage you," he began kindly; but she shrugged.

"Oh, that's all right," she said. "It isn't that that I'm sorry for. It's for the way he's turned out. I thought he'd at least act the gentleman. But it seems he's a—a—"

Her brows wrinkled as she sought for the word. She turned to Marie for help.

"What was it *Lord Sutcliffe* always called them, Marie? Oh, yes,"—with sudden recollection,—"*rotter*. That's what he is, a *rotter*. And I really thought that, some day, he'd come back from Europe and we'd be married."

She shrugged again, pathetically.

"But my dear child!" Uncle Elias protested. "You couldn't marry an Italian organ-grinder. You could never be happy with a man so out of your sphere."

"We could have been happy for a while," she said carelessly, "and then, of course, he would be away from home a great deal and I could have a lover. They all do, you know."

He stopped short in something he was about to say. He stopped short and stared at her, his little eyes looking almost wide in his astonishment. He seemed to be stunned.

"Eh?" he gasped. "Eh? What was that you said?"

She did not know that she had astounded him—did not know that she had said anything out of the ordinary.

"I said I could have a lover," she repeated evenly. "They all do."

STILL he stared. Then, feeling that something was expected of him by way of reply, he muttered: "Quite so! Yes, of course. They all do."

He peered into the shadows where Marie was still huddled down in her great carved chair, and he peered out of the window into the dazzling sunlight that showed how dingy the street was, and then he peered at Alice again and pulled at the loose, low collar about his neck as though it choked him.

"Yes, of course, they all do," he maundered like a man still dazed. "I suppose this Lord—Lord Sutcliffe has told you about it—eh? Is he a frequent visitor at your house?"

She looked at him, puzzled.

"Visitor? Who?"

"This Lord Sutcliffe."

She smiled up at him tolerantly.

"Oh, you don't understand," she explained. "*Lord Sutcliffe* isn't a really living person. He's a character in one of our books."

"Yes? One of—whose books?"

"Ours—Marie's and mine."

"I see. And does your mother give you these books?"

She looked quite shocked.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Mother can't be bothered, you know. Marie and I get them from the library."

He nodded understandingly.

"Yes, of course," he repeated. "From the library. And your mother cannot be bothered. Is she ill?"

"No, not ill exactly, but she has so many things to think about, you know."

"Very busy, naturally. So she never sees these books that you and Marie get from the library—does not know you get them?"

"No sir."

"Of course not. She cannot be bothered. I forgot. What are some of these books that you and Marie get from the library?"

She named half a dozen offhand. Then Marie remembered half a dozen more and named them from the depths of her great carved chair in the shadows. Then Alice recalled others.

UNCLE ELIAS turned his keen eyes from one to the other and back again. In them there seemed to grow an expression of wonderment as he heard these children glibly repeating titles that were bywords in the world of books.

When they had finished, he motioned Alice to a chair and slumped down in one himself, helplessly, breathlessly, as though his knees had grown too weak to support even his frail weight.

"Just let me think a minute," he begged. "Just keep quiet and let me think a minute."

She watched him curiously, for there was something in his tone and his attitude quite foreign to the stern and cyclonic old man she had been led to believe he was. The something was a weakness she could not explain, an uncertainty for which, as she reviewed their conversation, she could find no adequate reason. Perhaps he was sorry for the way he treated Luigi. That was probably it.

"You needn't mind about Luigi, you know," she hastened to reassure him. "I'm rather glad to find out what a rotter he really is. I'm only sorry that I bothered you about him at all. You see, I really thought I was bringing you a genius and that you'd be glad."

He tried to moisten his lips as he sat staring at her, and he swallowed hard once or twice, but he did not seem to be taking in what she was saying at all. He still seemed to be struggling to regain his dazed senses.

"But there's one thing, Uncle Elias, that—" She glanced up shyly, a flush of timidity on her cheeks and her voice faltering with her first lack of self-confidence. "There's one thing you said," she went on, "that I'd like to speak about, if you wouldn't consider it impudent."

"Wha-what is it? he stammered weakly.

"It was what you said about nobody's ever coming to see you unless they wanted something. I really do not want a thing in the world, now that we have disposed of Luigi's case. And if you wouldn't mind,—that is, if it wouldn't annoy you,—I should like—"

She stopped in confusion as though she had been too forward with him. He darted a sharp, suspicious gleam out of his gray eyes at her and then drew in a breath that caught strangely in the middle.

"You mean you would like to come to see me sometime—just to be sociable?" he asked.

"Yes sir."

He laughed nervously.

"But I'm only a crabbed old fogey. I'm no kind of company for a lively young girl."

She shook her head.

"I don't think you are crabbed at all," she declared with decision. "I thought you would be, but you're not. I heard that it was perfectly impossible for anyone to get along with you at all, and Uncle Henry Langwell told Mother that even an angel couldn't live with you, but it's very easy to see that they do not know you. I think you have been simply splendid to us this afternoon, considering the way Luigi behaved."

"Then you don't think I'm quite so bad as your Uncle Henry Langwell makes me out, eh?"

"I certainly do not. I think I shall tell him so."

But he held up a hand in quick protest.

"For heaven's sake, don't," he said. "I wouldn't have them change their opinions for the world. This house would be full of 'em all the time if they did."

But he took her warm hand in both of his and held it nervously, without shaking it as she expected that he would do.

"Let me see—to-morrow will be Monday, wont it?" he said. "Yes, Monday, and what time will you be out of school to-morrow?"

She told him, wondering.

"Well, then," he continued, "suppose

you come here at four. Maybe I'll see you, and maybe I won't. I can't tell. I'm a cranky sort of an individual, and I can't tell what I may do. I'll think it over. Come at four, will you? Just you?"

"You mean—and not Marie?"

"Yes—and not Marie—just you. I may want to talk to you very privately."

She looked over at Marie sorrowfully and somewhat uncertainly, but Marie nodded to her out of the shadows of the great carved chair to go ahead.

"Very well," she said. "I'll be here. And if you decide you'd rather not bother about me, your man can tell me so when I ring the bell. I really won't mind: I find everybody would rather not bother about me, so I'm quite used to it."

They called good-by to him again from the great double doorway, but he was still slumped down in his chair by the window, his little beady eyes fixed dazedly upon the blaze of sunlight on the dusty floor, his thoughts apparently far away from them. So they did not disturb him again. They opened the front door noiselessly and closed it noiselessly behind them, and they did not speak as they made their way back again to Rittenhouse Square. Then, when they had settled themselves upon a bench, Alice said:

"I think it's a shame for a nice old man like that to have a family that is so mean to him. I thought he was perfectly splendid this afternoon, didn't you?"

"Y-e-s—" said Marie in a tone by no means enthusiastic. "But what about the way he treated Luigi?"

Alice's eyes became hot with indignation.

"The way he treated Luigi!" she cried. "You mean the way Luigi treated him. Why, Luigi was contemptible."

"But—but—" Marie stammered, "I thought you loved Luigi."

Alice sniffed.

"Only partially," she said. "I would go to the ends of the earth for a man who was really worthy of a woman's love, but I certainly do not propose to break my heart for a rotter."

CHAPTER IV

ALICE went to see Uncle Elias the next day at four, and Uncle Elias himself was standing at the dingy window waiting for her. He came to the front door and let her in.

"You see it is all right," he said quite cheerily. "I decided to bother."

She smiled up at him with something very like affection in her deep brown eyes, and he mumbled to himself, "Paulson! Paulson!" and led her down the dark hallway and up the dim, creaky stairs and to the back of the house, where she found herself in a great, high library, with shelves of books covering the walls, and a narrow gallery running around where the original ceiling had been cut away, and then more shelves of books covering the walls of what had once been the room above, and then the ceiling of that, which was the roof, pierced by a great skylight through which poured the brilliance of the afternoon sun.

It was a wonderful room. She stood in the doorway almost gasping in the surprise it caused her. She had never dreamed of so many books in the very house that one actually lived in, and she had not dreamed that grim old Uncle Elias would have such a room in his home—so big and bright and cheery. He laughed a little gleeful chuckle when he saw how pleased she was.

"You like it, eh?" he cackled, and his beady eyes quite disappeared into the wrinkles that his smile made around them. "Come in and take off your hat, and then we'll look at some of my pictures."

So they looked at his pictures. He took them out of one of the many long, wide, shallow drawers that were built up all around the room as a base to the book shelves. When she saw how many big pictures were in this drawer and how many drawers there were, she realized what a tremendous lot of pictures he must have and she wondered why he kept them all and kept them so carefully.

HE showed her the pictures, and he told her many things. But there were also many things that he did not

tell her. He did not tell her that the drawers held what all connoisseurs knew to be the most valuable collection of engravings in America. He did not tell her that almost any one of those that he showed her cost enough to keep her and her mother and the three slipshod old servants and the shabby Pine Street house for a month or even more.

Nor did he tell her of the hours he had spent the previous evening going all over them from drawer to drawer, picking one out here, choosing another there and finally putting these selections all together into the one drawer from which he was now taking them to show her. Nor did he tell her that these selections had been made, not for their artistic worth, but because the pictures furnished him the excuse for telling the stories that they illustrated. And these stories, though he cleverly kept her from realizing the intention, all came finally down to the one unescapable fact—that love is life's most beautiful and sacred gift, that marriage is love sanctified, and that men and women who hold marriage lightly and talk glibly of forbidden love ought by no manner of means to be admired by little girls who read about them in books, and that little girls or big girls, or women or men, for that matter, ought to feel only disgust and loathing for books—and for real people too—that tacitly or openly permit such monstrous things to happen.

He did not tell her these things in so many words. In fact, he was very, very careful not to; and as he struggled about the unaccustomed task of making his stories convey such a message to such a hearer, he pulled at his loose collar to keep it from strangling him, and tiny beads of cold sweat twinkled in the wrinkles of his tortured forehead. It was a terrible task for him. She could not know how terrible it was.

He told his stories wonderfully well. She marveled at the change that came into his voice when he spoke of love. His voice then lost its cackle; it lost its thin, strident note of petulance and sounded deep and rich and—yes, almost thrilling! She wondered how grim old Uncle Elias Texler, of all men in the world, could know anything about love.

"These stories are all told beautifully in books," he said. "I am going to lend you these books to read. Then you will see how much more beautifully they are told than I can tell them."

But she looked up at him with great eyes shining with admiration.

"I think you tell them wonderfully," she exclaimed. "You tell them almost as though you had really gone through it yourself. Why, you know a great deal more about love than I thought you did. I didn't think you knew anything about it."

His sharp little eyes pierced through her a moment, and then, with an odd look upon his face, he walked slowly over to the great triple window in the south wall and stood looking at something that was there.

"Come here a moment," he said almost in a whisper. She went over and stood beside him and looked too.

AN old-fashioned wooden easel stood in the window-alcove in such a way that the afternoon light flooded the painting that it held. Alice looked at the painting, and without knowing that she did it, drew in her breath in a quick little gasp of ecstasy.

"Oh, how beautiful!" she murmured in awe. "How wonderfully—thrillingly beautiful! Who is she?"

He sat down before the portrait without a word; and without a word he drew Alice down upon his knee and thus they remained in silent contemplation of the lovely girl-face upon the canvas. It was a long time before either spoke. Then:

"Tell me, Uncle Elias," she pleaded, putting her arm affectionately across his old shoulders.

He smiled at her, shrewdly, craftily.

"And you didn't think I knew anything about love—eh?"

She could see that he was trying to make his voice sound thin and cackly and horrid again, and that he was squeezing his queer, wizened smile up sharper and sharper. All of a sudden he turned away and looked out of the window. But he had not done it quickly enough. She had seen the two tears that had come into his eyes. She patted his shoulder and mothered him.

"I didn't know," she whispered to him. "I didn't know. Nobody ever told me."

She saw him gulp hard once or twice, and then, when he had recovered control of himself, he turned back to the picture and they both sat studying it intently.

"No," he said, more to himself than to her. "No, I suppose nobody ever told you. I suppose they have all forgotten it long ago—all forgotten it except me."

"Who was she?"

"She was my wife—my sweetheart of long ago. She would have been your Aunt Prudence if God hadn't taken her away. But He knew what a cranky, crabbed, cantankerous old skinflint I was going to turn out to be, and He didn't want her to suffer—because she was one of His angels, and His angels mustn't suffer. So He let me have her just a little while and then He took her back."

"Oh!" Alice felt the great lump that rose in her throat, and she wanted to cry, but she didn't. "Oh, how sad!"

He shook his old head at her brightly.

"No it isn't," he said. "It was the best thing in the world. Some day I will get over my crankiness, and then God will take me up and show me where she is waiting for me, and then He will leave us together, happy forever. But it wouldn't be right for Him to do it now. She would be perfectly miserable if she saw me this way. And He knows that. He understands. God always understands."

"Was it so very long ago that He took her away?"

"Thirty years."

And then he told her about her Aunt Prudence. He told her the wonderful love-story of a beautiful girl and a poor young man—a man with all the glamour of the famous Texler blood, but with no money to have a home of his own. And he told her how they married anyway, in spite of everybody—how they worked and loved, and suffered and loved, and almost starved but still loved. Always that—they loved through it all.

And then he succeeded, and the

money came rolling in; and then the baby came—and God took beautiful Aunt Prudence and the little baby away for a while.

WHILE Uncle Elias was telling Alice about it, and she sat there almost breathless, her great eyes shining with the marvel of it all, a deep-toned clock somewhere in the shadows tolled six.

"Bless my soul!" cried Uncle Elias, "is it that time already? Why, it seems as though you had just got here."

She shook herself as if she had been wakened from a delightful dream.

"Oh, I don't want to go home yet," she said. "It has all been so wonderful. Why, Uncle Elias, you are the most thrilling person I ever knew—much more thrilling than any of those people in our books, because you are real. Please, may I come again sometime?"

He looked down at her with a most peculiar, soft expression in his funny little eyes. Then he wrinkled himself all up again and looked savage.

"No," he said, and he made his voice sharp and cackly once more—but he was smiling. "No—not until to-morrow. I positively cannot be bothered before to-morrow."

"Then to-morrow afternoon I may come again?"

"You—you couldn't come in the morning too, I suppose? And stay to lunch? No, of course not. Well, then, in the afternoon. Yes, in the afternoon, to-morrow, you may bother me again."

Alice went home, still in her dream. After dinner she went up again to the nursery, but somehow something seemed to be the matter with Marie. Marie's chatter, which had always before found her in a responsive mood, now irritated her. It seemed silly and inconsequential and not at all the kind of talk that one should expect from a person of common sense.

Alice went the next day again to the old house on Spruce Street.

Uncle Elias had more pictures and more stories ready for her, but she drew him over to the chair in the south windows before the easel and made him tell her more and still more about the lovely woman whose portrait watched them with smiling, understanding eyes.

DAY after day Alice came to Uncle Elias in this way. And day after day, although she did not then realize it, her whole viewpoint of life was changing.

She found old Uncle Elias an idealist, and she became an idealist with him. She found that he hated savagely all that was gross and vulgar and untrue, and she began to hate it savagely too. She found that he was able, with his poet's vision, to see a halo of beauty and sanctity about even the sordid physical facts of life, and she attained to his poet's vision and saw the halo as he saw it.

He taught her many things. He taught her to hate the sham and hypocrisy and the snobbery of the Texlers and the Langwells. He taught her that the one attribute which merits respect is personal character, and that all the blue blood and all the inherited wealth and position in the world will not give character to a man or a woman born without it.

The spring merged into summer, and the hot days came when Uncle Elias usually shut up his town house and hurried north to his big, airy camp in the New England lakes where his old-spinster sister had already opened the house and written twice to ask why he did not come. The questions seemed to worry him very much. He had almost made up his mind to go to escape the stifling heat that shimmered up from the pavements of the city, and he spoke of it to Alice that afternoon as they sat in the great triple window with Aunt Prudence.

Alice heard his voice as he told her, but she did not answer him. Something dry and hard seemed to click in her throat, and her great eyes opened to the widest he had ever seen, and they stared at him, but they had no expression in them. He repeated his words, thinking she had not heard him, but he saw that she had. Still she stared without expression, and that dry click sounded again in her throat so loudly that it was plainly audible to him. Then he understood.

"I was thinking of going," he hurried on to say, "but I quite made up my mind not to. That was what I started

to tell you—yes, to tell you that I am not going. That was it."

She put her hand up to her forehead and brushed it across her eyes as though she wanted to brush away an ugly vision that somebody, by some hideous trick of legerdemain, had conjured up to frighten her. And then she smiled.

And the old heart of grim Elias Texler smiled and laughed and seemed to want to dance a funny little jig in great glee inside of him, for it was the first time in thirty years that he had seen plainly that somebody loved him—him!—crafty, skinflinty, cantankerous old Elias Texler! Somebody really loved him! Somebody was almost bowled clean over just by the thought that he was going away for a little while!

So he stayed on through the summer, though he suffered tortures, and he told his interfering, fussy old alarmist of a doctor to go to the devil, that he was just as good a man as he was thirty years ago and he'd show 'em all that it took more than a little hot weather to knock him out.

And he proved it. The heat was terrific, but all through July and August he stuck to his post in the triple window where, every afternoon, he and Alice and Aunt Prudence told each other wonderful stories and looked at wonderful pictures and read wonderful books.

They found in each other—the old man and the young girl—the very complement that each needed for the development of complete spiritual entity. But as suddenly as they had found each other, they lost each other.

ALICE was surprised to see, one evening when she went down to dinner, that her Uncle Henry Langwell was at the table with her mother and that they both spoke to her with quite astonishing humanness a great many times all through the meal. Uncle Henry, in fact, fairly beamed upon her, and her mother was disconcerting in her frank glances of new-found regard. It was very mystifying to Alice. She was not accustomed to being treated so at home.

When the coffee-cups had been placed before them and Mrs. Texler had dismissed the slipshod servant, Uncle

Henry beamed even more expansively than ever upon Alice and said, in his unctuous voice:

"I understand, my dear, that you are getting to be quite friendly with your Uncle Elias Texler."

Some one had told on her. She knew at once that it was the discarded and neglected Marie.

"I am very glad that you get on so nicely with Uncle Elias." It was her mother's voice this time, but different from the way her mother's voice had ever sounded before; it sounded almost as oily as Uncle Henry's. "But you should have told me about it. I should have seen to it that you wore something more presentable than that thing."

From force of long years of habit, her mother's voice thinned to querulousness, but Uncle Henry held up a warning hand.

"To be sure, it might have been better," he placated; "but then, you get along nicely in spite of old dresses, do you not, my dear?"

And he beamed at her again.

Alice suddenly stiffened. She saw it all. They were treating her as though she were a child, ignorant, unsophisticated, without perspicacity. Little they knew of the insight into human frailties—and into Texler-Langwell frailties—that she had received from grim Uncle Elias!

SHE stiffened. She saw through them at once. Her stomach seemed to turn within her in nausea, and she wanted to snarl as Luigi had snarled—with disgust, with revulsion—Ar-r-gh!

Oily Uncle Henry continued:

"Your Uncle Elias is a most estimable man and one whose friendship is sought by many. But it is won by few."

"Yes, by very few—in fact, by none," her mother agreed when he paused.

"And your mother and I have been talking it over this afternoon. We agreed that you are a very fortunate young lady."

"Yes, very fortunate. But I do wish you had told me—"

Uncle Henry's warning hand silenced Mrs. Texler again, and they both sat and beamed upon Alice, waiting for her

to say something. She did not speak. Her rounded lips drew almost into a straight line, and in the great depths of her eyes, a fierce fire of resentment smoldered.

It ought to have warned them. But apparently they did not notice it. Uncle Henry broke the silence at last.

"I suppose you know," he said, "that your Uncle Elias is a very wealthy man. And he has no relatives except a very old sister in New England, and she is not in the best of health. I say your Uncle Elias is very wealthy. And he has no relatives—not one."

He paused impressively and glanced at his sister, who nodded. Then he spread out his hands in a deprecating way.

"Of course," he continued, "we do not wish you to gain the impression that his wealth and his age and—ah, ahem!—what one might call the materially beneficial possibilities—"

He glanced at Mrs. Texler for corroboration, and she nodded again.

"Of course not," she agreed. "Quite so. Of course not."

"Yet, nevertheless, we thought it wisest to point out to you the desirability of exercising extreme care in your intercourse with him—of doing nothing which might give him an unfavorable opinion, of seeing—"

"Of not going there in those shabby rags," her mother interrupted petulantly. "Really, Alice—"

But Uncle Henry's hand again checked her.

"You see, my dear—"

BUT Alice could stand no more. The fires that had smoldered in her eyes blazed out in withering fury. The hot blood surged into her cheeks and inflamed them.

She sprang to her feet and faced them, her fists clinched at her sides.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Oh! He was right about you-all. He was right! He said you were all a damned pack of bloodsuckers, and you are."

She rushed to the door but swung upon them with renewed fury.

"And now you've spoiled it!" she cried. "You want me to be nice to him

and pretend to love him so that he will die and leave me all of his money. But I won't do it, I tell you. I won't! I won't!"

She stamped her foot hysterically, and her voice was breaking, for the tears were very close.

"I've loved him just because—just because—I've loved him. And now you've spoiled it all. I'll never see him again—never, never! Oh, you are—you are vultures. I hate you! I hate you!"

She rushed from the room and down the long hallway, and hatless and coatless as she was, she rushed out of the door and up the street and she did not pause in her rush until she had rung clamorously at Uncle Elias' door-bell. She almost bowled over the dignified servant who opened the door for her, but she disregarded him entirely and rushed down the hall and up the stairs, into the great library and down its long length to where Uncle Elias sat in the big chair in the triple window.

SHE flung herself upon the floor at his feet, and before he could rise in his astonishment, she had buried her face in her hands upon his knees and was sobbing her heart out.

He asked her no questions at first. They had grown too close to make questions always necessary. He understood at once that it was something quite out of the ordinary, and he soothed her with a crooning "There—there, sweetheart. There—there!"

She told him all about it. She told him with racking sobs that shook her whole body, and when she came to the part where she had declared to them that she would never see him again, his arms pressed her more tightly than ever and then fell limply at his sides.

"For you understand, don't you, Uncle Elias, how they have spoiled it all? You understand how impossible it is now to go on, with their greedy, prying eyes always following us and their nasty, wagging heads nodding to each other and saying: 'She'll get all his money some day. Some day she'll get it all.' Don't you understand how perfectly impossible it would be?"

And he nodded somberly and said: "I understand."

She threw her pretty arms around his neck and sobbed afresh into the furrows of his faded neck.

"But oh, Uncle Elias! I love you so! I love you so! It will break my heart."

He patted her soothingly again and crooned "There—there!" until she was comforted.

But his dulled eyes would not look at her.

CHAPTER V

UNCLE ELIAS very nearly joined Aunt Prudence. His fussy old alarmist of a doctor put him to bed and called in half a dozen grave specialists, and they all shook their heads and bundled him off at once to his camp in New England.

It was largely due to the heat, they said, but it was principally a shock of some kind, though old Uncle Elias swore at them savagely when they asked him about it and told them to mind their own business. And when they told him that this was part of their business, he snapped: "Then you ought to know it without asking me; so shut up."

From the camp they bundled him off to Europe to take disgusting baths and drink nauseating waters, and there he had to stay.

Alice, meanwhile, suffered not only her great heart-hunger for him and his companionship but suffered even more the tangible, maddening habit of querulous reproach which her mother at once formed. Their dinners were no longer somber and silent. Alice would have been glad if they had been. But with the girl's open flouting of her family and her deliberate break with the old man from whom her family felt that she could have gained so assured a future of luxury, her mother altered her own attitude in life.

In past years Mrs. Texler had been content to suffer a patient if somewhat whining martyrdom. Now, however, she seemed to discover all at once that Alice was the ill-starred cause of it all. Alice had had it in her power to retrieve the family fortunes through the love of her wealthy old uncle. And Alice had obstinately, impudently and wickedly thrown that opportunity away.

Uncle Henry called once or twice and spent hours closeted with Mrs. Texler, and from each of these interviews Uncle Henry emerged scowling and thunderous and Mrs. Texler emerged red-eyed, wan and worried-looking. And dinner, on each of these evenings, was torture to Alice, for the heaped-on reproaches of her mother always ended in a wailing, "I'm sure I don't know what is to become of us. Uncle Henry's patience is exhausted, and you could have—"

They sent Alice off finally to a cheap boarding-school in the country, and then Mrs. Texler dismissed all of the slipshod servants, offered the old house for sale and went herself to accept the fourth-floor room and the daily meals which Uncle Henry grudgingly offered her in his own home as the most economical arrangement he was able to devise. And so, after that, Alice had no home.

Alice heard from her Uncle Elias only once during this period, and then it was indirectly. It was when she received from his lawyer a package which Uncle Elias had requested him to deliver.

It was a little gift from the old man—a photographic copy of the painting of Aunt Prudence, done in carbon upon porcelain and imbedded in a big, old-fashioned gold locket with a tiny diamond twinkling in the center of the case. Uncle Elias had had it made before closing up his house and sailing again for Europe—banished by his doctors from the severe changes in the climate of Philadelphia.

The girl grew amazingly in beauty during these school years. The open air of the country, the freedom of the wide sky and the far-stretching hills, the habit she formed of taking long, brisk walks every afternoon—these worked their marvels so swiftly and so astonishingly that she became known among the other girls as "Queenie" Texler.

She found none of them who attracted her sufficiently for intimate friendship. In fact, grim old Uncle Elias had almost spoiled her for intimate friendships. The seeds that he had sown of idealism, of visionary

dreaming, of halo-forming, had grown steadily; and she faced life with an odd reflex of his own queer personality.

In the summers her mother had her arrange to board with various families near the school, where she could be comfortable at little expense and where she could best teach herself to forget the obvious fact that her mother's resentment was becoming more bitter with the years and that, as for Uncle Henry, he refused under any consideration to have anything to do with her.

Alice was twenty years of age before she saw her family again. She had graduated from the school and had taken an extra year.

WITH the ending of the June exercises came a letter from her mother telling her in petulant terms that Uncle Henry had most magnanimously consented to let Alice share a room in his house temporarily. The Langwells were at their seashore cottage. Alice was told to join them there.

She arrived late one afternoon, lugging her suit-case up the long, cottage-lined avenue that skirted the dazzling shore. The scent of the salt air stirred her blood into instant response. The rich color crept into her cheeks, and her eyes flashed with the dream-thoughts conjured up by the miles of green water and the sound of the breakers rolling in. More than one man and all women turned to look at her a second time when she had passed them.

Two girls who came out from one of the cottages and turned down the avenue almost stopped short, and she plainly heard one of them exclaim: "What a perfectly dazzling beauty!" And as she watched for the numbers over the entrances to the cottages, she found that the one she sought was the one from which they had come.

She went in. The girls, glancing back, saw her and returned. The elder rushed up to her.

"Surely you are not Alice Texler!" she cried, "Cousin Alice?"

She nodded and smiled in spite of herself when she saw the conflicting emotions so plainly displayed upon the hopelessly homely faces of the two daughters of Henry Langwell.

Her adoption into the family of her uncle was amusing to her, in spite of the feeling that she was not wanted. She could see through all of them so clearly.

Her mother was fairly astounded by the beauty of this girl-child of hers. Had it not been for the nervous attitude of cringing dependence which had long ago settled upon her, Mrs. Texler would almost have been proud of Alice. But she had ceased to be proud of anything. She had nearly ceased to have any definite personality at all, and none of the Langwells looked upon her as much above the station of a rather higher-class old family servant.

With the advent of Alice she became more nervously apologetic than ever. She wanted to boast of her daughter and to be with her—when others were there also. But secretly she feared the girl. She feared the girl's fine, clear eyes fixed upon her in resentment, almost in contempt, when she performed her servile offices for the Langwells. She feared the girl's cold, level voice in the few words they had together in private—words in which Alice begged her mother to remember that she too was a Langwell and that these relatives of hers had no right to heap humiliations upon her so openly.

THE Langwell girls and their mother required several days to become accustomed to the beauty so unexpectedly thrust upon them, and then they openly hated the possessor of it. Their house at once became thronged with young men. They were the very young men that Mrs. Langwell and her two plain daughters most desired as attendants, but the fact that the callers had sedulously avoided the cottage before showed all too clearly what was the attraction now. And Mrs. Langwell and the homely Langwell girls grew furious at the open neglect of themselves in their own house by the young men who thronged it.

Alice avoided these men as much as possible. She found them vapid, insipid, totally uninspiring. She had no knack of killing time by talking unending nothingnesses, and that was all the young men talked. Uncle Elias had

spoiled her for that. And she saw very plainly how it was with her cousins and her aunt, and she did what she could not to increase the ill-feeling.

The endless round of feverish, aimless activity that made up the resort-life bored her to extinction. She tried, for her mother's sake, to take her part, but so far as she could see, the activities were designed with the sole purpose of keeping one from being alone and thinking.

And to be alone and to think was exactly what Alice most desired. She wanted to readjust herself to life. Coming as she had from the convent-like routine of the girls' school in the country, where presentable men were things almost unknown, she wanted to take these men who now swarmed about her and to dissect them by her own searching mental methods, with the keen scalpel that Uncle Elias had given her.

They made love to her—these men—whenever they could get her alone. And such love! In the light of what Uncle Elias and Aunt Prudence had taught her of love, they seemed to her to be either puerile or reptilian. There was no halfway with them. The perfectly useless, aimless lives they led rendered them incapable of any real depth of feeling as she understood depth of feeling, and the shallow emotions which impelled them to woo her took the color of their predominant characteristics. It was either silly, boyish mawkishness or it was the shameful fleshly craving of the overbred animal.

To flee them, she resumed her school-day habit of taking long, brisk walks by herself, far down the firm beach miles from the likelihood of intrusion, and there, with the deep booming of the sea in her ears and the keen, bracing ocean breeze fanning her cheeks, she sat on the sand and dreamed.

She bathed in the afternoons with the shrieking mob at the public beach. She loved to swim, and she swam well. But in the too-generous revealments of her short skirt she found herself more than ever pursued by the young men who thronged her uncle's house. But she escaped them. She understood perfectly. She understood every look and

could even feel the burning eyes fixed upon her when her back was turned.

She romped mostly with the children during the bathing-hours. They adored her. She took them out into the waters on her fine young shoulders and let the waves break over them deliciously, and they screamed at the top of their voices, half in fright, half in sheer joy, while they dug their fingers convulsively for safety into her abundant hair.

With the children she felt clean, pure, unsullied. With them she forgot the burning eyes of men and the sordid things of life, and faced the whole world once more like a little child herself, wide-eyed with delight.

And in such a frame of mind one afternoon, coming from the breakers, a child tugging happily at each hand, her wet bathing-suit clinging with far too much intimacy, she heard a voice as she passed.

"By George, Ned!" it said. "There's the finest figure in Christendom—eh?"

SHE turned, not in scorn, not even in annoyance. She stopped and turned and faced him squarely, her level eyes calm, clear, altogether without emotion of any kind.

He was a great, coarse hulk of a man in tight and scanty swimming-trunks and shirt. His legs and arms were muscled like a giant's and skinned and haired like those of a gorilla. He was thick with the thickness of tremendous bodily strength, with simian length of arm and shortness of trunk, with sinews and bones such as some stone-heaving antediluvian conqueror might have bent triumphantly against a puny dinosaur.

But she seemed scarcely to glance at his body. Her eyes went straight to his little, glinting eyes and there they stayed. And they probed him without flinching. He tried to meet them in defiance; he tried to bluster his thick, sensual lips out in a devil-may-care leer but he failed.

Slowly a deep red dyed the coarse skin of his cheeks as the girl held him, and only the voice of his friend saved him.

"Come on, Creedon," his friend said. "Let's find the others down the beach."

Alice married Creedon a year later.

CHAPTER VI

A YEAR later Alice shuddered with loathing as Creedon's great hairy paw closed over her hand and a minister of the gospel mocked her with the wicked words that gave her into this man's arms. She did not love Daniel Creedon. She hated him. She hated him from the day when, shortly after their inauspicious meeting on the beach, he managed to find out who she was and to have himself invited to her uncle's cottage.

Daniel Creedon was not of the kind with whom Langwells and Texlers ordinarily associated; but he had piled up a vast wealth which had made his name a household word; and his wealth and his own dogged, unflinching, dominating will-power usually got him what he wanted. And he wanted an invitation to the Langwell cottage.

Alice's hatred did not become really active until, through the sardonic ill-fortune that seemed to dog her life, she saw that he was likely to possess her in spite of herself. At first she had treated him merely with that calm and self-possessed aloofness which made her so baffling a puzzle to many men. It baffled Daniel Creedon too. But he was a man who could not be insulted. He was like the fighter who blinks his way through a shower of stinging blows, enduring them all doggedly and waiting—waiting for the opening to the vulnerable spot of his adversary.

So Daniel Creedon blinked and endured her blows. And he waited—waited.

They carried Uncle Henry Langwell home to his cottage one blazing hot day in the end of August. He had been stricken on the beach. They carried him out of his cottage two weeks later, but this time he was followed by a little procession in black, and they all took carriages to the train and went with the body to the old family burying-ground in Philadelphia.

Alice and her mother were without a home.

MRS. TEXLER'S little income from the sale of their old Pine Street house was barely sufficient for their

most modest needs. They arranged to take rooms with a cousin, for Mrs. Texler's ideas were hopelessly old-fashioned, and she considered that a woman who did not belong to some one was not quite respectable. So they promptly made themselves belong to the cousin.

After a decent interval, Daniel Creedon called upon Mrs. Texler. Alice was not at home.

He called, he explained deferentially, because he was, fortunately, at that moment, in a position to offer Mrs. Texler a much more profitable investment for her tiny fortune than the one she had. He did not know, of course, he explained, just how she was situated, but this opportunity was so rare that he felt his offer to be only an act of friendly reciprocation for the many kindnesses which Mrs. Texler had shown him during the summer.

Mrs. Texler could not recall any of these kindnesses. But she was at her wits' end over her financial problems, and the chance he offered her could not be ignored. She thanked him and asked him to call again.

Daniel Creedon did call again. He called many times. Alice was not present at any of these interviews; nor did he ask for her. He was blinking under the blows and waiting—waiting.

There were details to be arranged and difficulties to be surmounted. Mrs. Texler found that her investments were not immediately negotiable, and she was almost in despair when she told him of it, for she sorely needed more money. But he pooh-poohed at such a trifling difficulty and said that he would be very glad to advance the sum temporarily to her, for she had been most kind to him during the summer—most kind.

So the transaction was arranged. And Mrs. Texler asked him to call on an evening when she knew Alice would be at home, so that they could both thank him.

It was when her mother told her of this that Alice's hatred of Creedon became active. She saw through it all so clearly. And she saw that Creedon's dogged waiting was bringing him closer—closer.

"But Mother, I will not hear of such a thing," she cried, the deep resentment

burning in her cheeks. "I will not permit either you or myself to be humiliated by that Creedon beast."

"Alice!" Her mother's tone was properly shocked. "How often have I asked you not to refer to Mr. Creedon in that way? You have done it ever since you first met him at the shore."

Alice ignored the reproach.

"Have you agreed to his shameful proposition?" she demanded.

"Shameful?" Only Mrs. Texler's desperate financial needs gave her the will-power to argue with this daughter, whom she secretly feared. "Really, Alice—"

"'Really, Alice,' you know it is shameful," her daughter mocked bitterly. "The Creedon beast is crouching, ready for a spring. He will spring over you without scratching you. But do you know where he will land?"

She shuddered.

"I can feel his claws sinking into my flesh already. Ar-r-gh!"

It was Luigi's snarl of loathing, and as it escaped her, it took her thoughts in a flash back to Uncle Elias and the great triple window and the wonderful love-dreams they had dreamed with Aunt Prudence there. The miniature, which she wore by the gold chain about her neck, seemed to burn into the skin where it rested.

"Mr. Creedon is a man of great genius," her mother declared, but the voice in which she uttered the words was sinking to her accustomed whine. She had not the stamina to argue long with anyone, least of all with her capable daughter. "He is—he is—"

She trailed off into a helpless, hopeless sob and sank into a chair.

Alice threw up her hands in despair. She knew her mother's fits of hysteria. They had grown all too frequent lately. And they always ended in her mother's taking to her bed with shaken nerves and a raging headache, to moan and toss and bewail her fate for days afterward. Mrs. Texler was breaking up fast. Alice knew it and really feared for her mother's sanity.

The Creedon beast was all suave politeness on the evening her mother had thus set for their dual thanksgiving. Alice tried to be as decent to him

as she could, but every time he looked at her with his little, glinting, piggish eyes, she felt herself shudder inwardly and wondered how she would ever endure the seemingly inevitable lot that awaited her.

But fate was not done with her by any means. It was a disastrous year in the markets, and Mrs. Texler found suddenly that her securities, which she had planned to turn into cash to repay the money which Creedon had advanced for their new investment, had become temporarily almost worthless. She was hopelessly in his debt.

She did not dare break the terrible news to Alice. She saw Creedon alone the next time he called, and in her nervous, apologetic whine, explained it to him, all the while crushing her handkerchief into an abject and pitiful little ball with hands that would not keep still under her tension.

But Creedon calmed her. She was too preoccupied to notice the gleam of triumph in his glinting eyes. She was conscious only of the wonderful charm of his voice, of the magnanimity of this great man of finance, as he assured her that it would not inconvenience him in the least to allow things to stand just as they were until the market strengthened and her securities resumed their normal cash values.

But the market did not strengthen. Evening after evening she seized the newspapers to devour the financial columns with paling face as she read the reiterated news that held her still hopelessly in debt to the man her daughter loathed.

She kept it all secret from Alice. She was afraid to tell. She brooded over it through the day, and at night it kept her wakeful, so that soon the nerve-strain began to tell and she broke down.

She was a pitiful enough object in those days. Alice nursed her almost with tenderness and watched carefully at her bedside for some hope of improvement, but none came.

Then one day Mrs. Texler confided her worries to the old family doctor, and he took Alice aside and told her all. She listened with hard eyes. As the doctor talked, she could almost feel two great, hairy arms creeping around her.

She went in to her mother and talked it over with her quite calmly.

"I'll marry the Creedon beast, Mother," she said.

"Alice! Has he asked you?"

"No, but I can arrange that. I've got the finest figure in Christendom, by George—eh? And I'm sure the Creedon beast is an expert on fine figures."

"Alice!"

"You needn't be shocked, Mother."

"But I don't understand."

"No, dear, you wouldn't. Don't try. You are simply to try to get well. It is my—my task to see that nothing worries you in the future. That is what Dr. Sergeant told me."

The old lady's eyes sparkled with satisfaction. She said:

"He is tremendously wealthy—"

"Yes—disgustingly. I've understood so."

"And you will have a magnificent home—"

"House, Mother, not home. I—we shall have a palace, I suppose. But please don't call it home."

"You will be married in Holy Trinity, of course—"

But Alice rose in sudden revulsion.

"Not that, Mother!" she cried. "Not that, of all things. I'll marry the Creedon beast, but not in Holy Trinity—nor any place where anyone can see my awful shame."

"Alice! Dear child, you are young. He will be good to you. You will learn to love him."

The girl looked at her with level eyes.

"I shall learn many things, Mother," she said, "but to love the Creedon beast will never be one of them."

SHE went down to him that evening when he called to inquire for her mother's health. She asked him to sit down, and she saw plainly the gleam that came into his eyes at this mark of her bending. She sat opposite him, outwardly calm and composed but inwardly more perturbed than she had ever been in all of her life before. She had made up her mind to see the thing through. But how could she stand it?

"Is your mother better?" he asked politely.

"Not really better, but at least no worse. She will never be really much better, Dr. Sergeant tells me."

He raised his bushy brows in polite concern.

"It is serious, then?"

"Physically it is not. She is perfectly well physically, and would soon be strong again if it were not for the worry. But her mind has weakened. She is no longer able to throw off worry by will-power. She will never be well until the cause of her worry is removed."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?"

Alice smiled, but there was no humor in it.

"That depends," she said. "The thing that is worrying her most is her debt to you. She sees no way of ever repaying it."

He flushed under the directness of her gaze. His teeth kept constantly chewing at the ends of his thick, stubby mustache, but the doggedness in his eyes never faltered. He had endured the blows, blinking but unflinching. His waiting was almost over.

"Oh, I say, Miss Alice!" he exclaimed. "You oughtn't to let her worry about that. Why, it's nothing. She can have twice as much if she wants it."

"But that would make her twice as much in your debt. And Dr. Sergeant says that she must have more ease both of mind and body in the future—more luxuries and none of the petty little schemes to scrimp and save—"

"Certainly—exactly! Now listen to me."

He suddenly became sure of himself. They were talking money, and he knew that talk in every language, ancient and modern. He almost looked upon himself as the inventor of money.

She saw him edge forward in his chair, and she shrank back in spite of herself.

"Listen, Miss Alice," he repeated. "It's a perfectly plain, simple proposition. There isn't any reason in the world why your mother should ever worry again or want for anything—anything, mind, no matter if it costs a million. Eh?"

THEIR eyes met in a long gaze that neither averted. He knew that the crisis had come. He knew that she knew it. And he knew that he was going to win.

"You see how simple it is, don't you?" he went on. "Marry me: that's all that's necessary. You marry me, and your mother—why, Lord Almighty! I'll hand her a million dollars outright and you another, if money is all you want. What's a couple of million to me, compared to you? Why, Alice, I've loved you—"

But she held up a quick hand in protest.

"Please," she begged. "Let us leave love out of the matter. You and I have such totally different ideas of it. You've wanted me; that, of course, I have known right along. You've wanted me ever since that day on the beach when you discovered that I had the finest figure in Christendom, by George—eh?"

He flushed hotly at the memory of that first encounter.

"I don't love you, Mr. Creedon," she went on evenly. "Very far from it! And I never shall love you. I shall never even feel respect for you. But all my life my mother has felt bitterly toward me because I allowed sentimental considerations to deprive her of one fortune. Now, with the prospect of having her on my hands helpless, childish, totally dependent upon me, I have no right to allow sentimental reasons to cloud the pathetic remaining years of her life. I will marry you, but you must take me without love or the slightest semblance of love."

Into his little pig eyes there sprang the hot flames of triumph.

He started to rise, but her upraised hand again stopped him.

"Aw, say, Alice," he protested. "We're engaged, ain't we? Don't I get one little kiss—just one?"

She shuddered with revulsion. How many kisses he could take as his right so soon!

"No," she cried, "not now. After we are married, you may do as you please with me—but only after we are married. Until then, don't mention kisses to me."

"All right." He subsided with the

same dogged refusal to be insulted that he had always shown. "All right. But when are we going to be married? How soon?"

She gripped herself hard.

"To-morrow?" she suggested.

His eyes seemed to burn into her.

"Yes, to-morrow," he said eagerly. "Where?"

"At Mother's bedside. It would be best for her. And"—she could not hide the loathing in her tone—"with no one present except Dr. Sergeant and the minister and my old maid, Marie. I shall send for her."

THEY boarded Creedon's big steam yacht after the ceremony the following afternoon. They did it before any of the reporters could get a hint of the wedding from the marriage-license list, and by the time the ferrets of the press were after them they had weighed anchor and were standing down the Delaware on their way to Bermuda.

So they did not see the black headlines in the papers the next day. They did not know of the tremendous stir created by the union of this daughter of an ancient house with this modern Croesus. They did not know of all the disgusted, envious head-wagging of all the Langwells and all the Texlers.

And Alice did not know that the news was cabled abroad for the financial readers of the foreign papers and that it was read, in a quaint European health-resort, by a grim old man with faded eyes. And she did not know that, as he read it, he shook his head sadly and put down his paper and let two great tears drop from his faded eyes, to twinkle in the wrinkles of his tortured cheeks.

She did not know this. She did not think of it at all. For the horrors of that unhallowed honeymoon so filled her mind and soul with nausea that she could think of nothing else.

CHAPTER VII

IT was when Alice returned from her honeymoon that her once-full lips became drawn into that thin straight line and her once-deep eyes became cold and hard and repellent.

In the luxury of the Creedon estate on the Main Line her mother grew to be a happy child. Mrs. Texler fairly reveled in the multiplicity of the joys she found in the ability to satisfy her every little whim. Her mind was failing fast. She had no large wants. They were all small, infantile, almost, in their simplicity, and pathetic in their inutility.

Alice watched her and pitied her. Only the ease of her mother's declining years nerved the girl to go through with the constant tortures of her own tragedy. She braced herself and waited.

And all the time she knew that Daniel Creedon was living his own kind of life, unhampered by the letter of his marriage-vows. She did not object. She knew she had no right to. She knew that those vows had been nothing more than a formally polite cloak to cover a sordid bargain that politeness could not mention, and though she felt the humiliation of the openness with which he carried on his affairs, she bore it in silence. She only watched her mother failing and waited.

Mrs. Texler slipped quietly out of life about three o'clock one morning. She went out as a match that is burned to the end. There was no pain, no paroxysm, no agony. The flame of her vitality had simply grown dimmer and dimmer until it flickered a moment and then was no more.

Alice had watched with Dr. Sergeant since two in the afternoon. Her long, silent vigil beside the perfectly still white old figure on the bed had been a terrible strain, but she sat there wide-eyed and expressionless, as motionless as the dying woman, her lips pressed together, her hands clinched in her lap.

At three o'clock in the morning Dr. Sergeant's practiced eye noticed some alteration in his patient too slight for Alice to see. He went to the bed and leaned over for a long time. Then finally he stood erect, looked into Alice's wide eyes and shook his head sadly.

"She has gone," he said.

Alice rose from her chair without even the sound of a sob and left the room. In her mother's boudoir she found Marie.

"Find out if Mr. Creedon is home," she said. "If he is, have him awakened at once and ask him to come to me in my library. Tell him it is most important. Then you are to go to my bedroom and wait until I call you."

She walked down the long hall into the room which adjoined her boudoir. It was lined with shelves that contained her own books—the kind that grim old Uncle Elias had taught her to read and understand. She waited, standing, by the great carved table in the center, bathed in the deep red of the electrolie shade. Presently the sound of heavy, shuffling footsteps came across the hall to her, and she stiffened and moistened her lips.

Daniel Creedon entered. He was in loose dressing-gown, his hair disheveled from his pillow, his little eyes heavy with sleep, his coarse lips puffed and swollen. He was not pretty.

"I must apologize for waking you," she said as he entered. Her voice was like a thin, sharp knife. "Mother has just died."

"Oh, I'm sorry—" he began.

"I did not send for you to get your sympathy," she interrupted. "I want to know at once what we can do about a divorce."

He stared at her in stupid amazement.

"Divorce!" he repeated.

"Yes. Do you suppose that I will continue to live with you now that Mother is dead?" She sneered at him in open disgust. "We made our bargain for her. You bought me, and the price was her happiness as long as she lived. You knew that was the only thing for which I sold myself—"

"Aw, Alice, let up on that kind of talk. Hang it all, you were glad enough to get me, I guess. I didn't have to coax very hard. Besides, all this can wait."

But she struck the table with her clinched fist.

"No," she cried, "it cannot wait. This is the last night that you and I will ever sleep under the same roof. To-day either you leave this house or I do. If you leave it, it must be for two years, with your promise not to return and interfere with my suit on the

grounds of desertion. That at least will avoid scandal. I suggest that you do it."

He blustered at her with an ugly sneer.

"And what if I don't take your suggestion?" he demanded.

Her dark eyes flashed warningly.

"Then I will let the world know the hideous things that I know about you. I will get Marie to tell of the welts and bruises and the great black-and-blue wounds that she has found on my body. I will bring in the names of a dozen or more of your other mistresses, and I will give the newspapers the photographs that Marie has recovered for me when you threw them away. Really, Creedon,"—she made him flinch with her bitter scorn—"you should not be so careless with the pictures of your women. When your ardor for the originals cools, see that the photographs are destroyed—and the letters, too. Four of these women that I know of are married and lived with their deluded husbands all the time."

HIS face was purple with ungovernable passion. He sprang toward her, his great fists raised.

"Marie," she called. "Quick!"

Marie ran through the boudoir and stood in the doorway.

"I want you to watch this," Alice said to her quietly. Then, turning to Creedon, she said: "Go on—hit me. You have often done it before."

His fists dropped to his side, and his face contorted horribly. He tried to browbeat her with his eyes, but she met his gaze and his eyes fell. He turned them suddenly upon Marie, and they blazed in renewed fury.

"You get the hell out of here," he shouted.

Marie glanced at her mistress questioningly.

"Go back to my bedroom," Alice said. "Leave the doors open. I may call you again."

They stood facing each other silently until the maid had disappeared. He found it impossible to meet her cold eyes.

"Well?" she asked.

"I suppose it's a hold-up," he grum-

bled. "How much do you want, anyway?"

Her lips curled.

"I will be more reasonable than your other mistresses," she said. "They have all made it pretty expensive for you to get rid of them. This time it will not cost you one single cent."

He looked up at her suspiciously, unbelievably.

"Eh?" he demanded.

"Not one cent," she repeated. "You have already paid for me. You kept your part of the bargain fairly well—much better than I, in fact, for I must have been a most unsatisfactory wife. No, Creedon; every cent that I have ever had from you has been a red-hot coal burning into my soul. I had to endure it for Mother's sake. But now—" Her voice had risen nervously. He looked at her in surprise; he had never seen her uncontrolled. "Now—oh, thank God! thank God! I can be free!"

She sank into the chair by the side of the table. Her teeth bit into her trembling lip until the blood came.

"Hurry and decide," she cried hysterically. "Let us end this as soon as possible. I cannot stand much more. Which is it to be?"

HIS little angry eyes roved sullenly about the room and finally fixed upon her. Then he shrugged helplessly.

"All right," he said. "I'll move out—that is, if you'll agree not to make a row about it. Just desertion, mind; no—no brutality charges. And you'll leave the other women out of it?"

"Yes."

"And return the photographs and letters?"

"After the divorce—yes. Not before."

"And no alimony?"

"Not a cent."

Again his eyes roved about the room.

"I'm willing to make you a decent allowance," he said. "It wouldn't do for you to look shabby."

"Thanks," she answered. "It isn't necessary. My Uncle Elias Texler's lawyer has been doing some business for me lately. He has found that

Mother's old investments have strengthened considerably. He has reinvested the money in some of Uncle Elias' more profitable ventures. I shall not be shabby."

He looked at her with a gleam of the old desire in his eyes, but it died under her steady, cool gaze. He turned.

"Good-by," he said.

She did not see him again. She waited in the great marble mausoleum, keeping vigil over her dead soul, as the days and weeks and months dragged by. She hated the place and loathed the thought that she was still living in his house, but her attorney advised it so strongly that she had to yield.

She had no friends except Dr. Harlowe and his wife. They were her next-door neighbors, as near as the ample grounds that surrounded both houses permitted. The servants had called Dr. Harlowe in hastily one evening when, her nerves completely unstrung by her brooding, she had been seized with an attack of vertigo at the table and had fainted. Dr. Harlowe and his wife were just starting for an after-dinner drive in their runabout. They drove directly over.

The acquaintance thus begun had grown. She found Dr. Harlowe much more efficacious in his modern treatment of overwrought women than was slow, ancient old Dr. Sergeant. And she found Mrs. Harlowe a woman whose sympathy seemed to embrace her and mother her at once.

She needed mothering—real mothering. She had never had it. In all her life her own mother had never mothered her. She found it deliciously soothing, and toward Mrs. Harlowe her heart went out in the first genuine love that she had known since that evening, now so long ago, when she had sobbed her farewell upon the thin knees of grim old Uncle Elias Texler.

They became good friends, though Alice never told them all the horrors of her tragedy and they never asked. They saw that she was a woman whose spirit was almost broken, and they knew that she was planning divorce. The Creedon beast's mode of life was too openly notorious to make questions necessary beyond this.

But long before the end of the first year of her waiting she was almost a wreck. She could not free her soul from the galling shackles of the Creedon estate. She began to stay all day in her own rooms, having Marie bring her meals to her there and taking only occasional breaths of fresh air out upon the balcony that opened from her bedroom.

She paled. Her nerves grew too tightly strung, too tense with the slow agony. Dr. Harlowe saw it and shook his head.

"You must get away from here," he said. "I shall see your lawyer and tell him it is absolutely necessary. You must come with us."

"Where are you going?"

"On our annual honeymoon—on our motor-boat *Firefly* down to Chesapeake Bay."

"Your honeymoon?" She appeared not to understand. Mrs. Harlowe smiled.

"It is Dr. Dick's way of referring to our summer vacation," she explained. "During the rest of the year we are both so busy we have very little time for each other. So every summer we cruise Chesapeake Bay in our little yacht and spend a whole month just making love to each other."

"Only you two?"

"Yes—no servants. Dr. Dick manages the motor and the boat, and I do the cooking and housework. If there were servants, it wouldn't be a real honeymoon."

She looked at these two whose love had remained thus warm though their hair was turning gray, and she bit her lip to keep back the sigh that would have been a sob.

"I'll go," she said.

ALICE went with the Harlowes on *Firefly*. The boat was a roomy little fifty-footer, stanch and strong and with ample accommodations for all three.

And she saw there, living and breathing in these two middle-aged friends of hers, the love that she had been taught by grim old Uncle Elias, the passion that he had told her of, strong and true and surviving the years, glowing warmly

to the end of life, hallowed, sanctified, ethereal.

The month's cruise built her up wonderfully. She returned with buoyant step and with eyes from which some of the hardness had gone, into which had crept some of the mystic light that glowed so steadily in the eyes of Dr. Dick and his wife.

And then the Creedon place closed her once more in its grip. She could not get away from the oppression of it. She began again to spend all of her time in her own rooms, and again her nerves stretched taut and Dr. Dick shook his head and worried.

"Never mind," she said. "It will not be long now. By September the waiting will be over and I shall be free."

And she broke down and wept hysterically.

The weeks passed, and April brought its first hint of spring. She pressed her lips and prayed for yet a little strength to fight it out.

May came, and with the full-throated chorus of love and life and the ecstasy of the mating season, she felt that she would go mad with the agony of the delay.

And, with the end of May, came the letter from the Creedon beast. "*You do not understand—*"

Oh, how thoroughly she had understood him!

"Hurry, hurry, Marie!" she cried, and she ran into her bedroom and began feverishly throwing things about while the careful Marie picked up the letter from the balcony where it had fallen and stuffed it for safe-keeping into the bosom of her dress.

It took only a few minutes to get together the things that Alice needed. Then, with a hasty good-by, she took the suit-case and rushed away.

CHAPTER VIII

DR. HARLOWE and his wife were at lunch when Alice rushed in breathlessly. She could not speak at first but sat down helplessly in a chair, gulping hard and staring stupidly from one to the other. Dr. Dick seemed to understand at once. He

flashed a quick message with his eyes to his wife, dismissed the servant and himself walked out of the room.

Alone with the motherly woman whose love had been such a refuge to her, Alice suddenly flung herself in a heap at Mrs. Harlowe's knees and sobbed out her broken story, just as she had sobbed out a story so many years before upon the knees of Uncle Elias.

Mrs. Harlowe heard her through.

"I must go away," Alice cried. "I must go away at once. Oh, I cannot stand it! To think that freedom was so near!"

"There, there, dear," Mrs. Harlowe said. "Of course you shall go away. Dr. Dick will arrange it all."

She went to the door and called him.

"Dr. Dick," she said, "this little girl is all unstrung. You must order her away."

"What seems to be the matter?" he asked.

But his wife looked at him significantly.

"You must order her away without asking what is the matter," she said, and he nodded understandingly. He went over and put his fingers upon Alice's pulse, but she knew that that was merely his way of getting a chance to look deeply into her troubled eyes.

"Yes," he said finally, "you must certainly get away at once and have rest—perfect, absolute rest. You must go without a moment's delay."

He glanced at the suit-case.

"I will drive you to the station," he said, "and to-morrow I will see your attorney and tell him about this very serious attack. And I shall be ready to testify that I sent you away for purely professional reasons and without knowing anything about the cause of the attack. Is that the idea?"

HIS wife nodded and smiled her gratitude for his ready comprehension.

"And where is it to be?" he asked, adding severely: "No crowded resort, mind you—some isolated farm somewhere, where nobody can possibly see you to bother you."

She looked up at him quickly.

"I hoped you would say that," she

cried. "I want to go to one of those wonderful places we saw on our cruise last summer—where I can see the water and the boats. What was that place where we all went ashore for eggs and milk and climbed that steep cliff to the farmhouse and there had such a magnificent view across the bay—the place with the entrance so narrow and hidden that I was afraid there wasn't any entrance at all?"

"Worton's Cove!" exclaimed Dr. Dick. "The very place. Peter Barber's farm!"

"Why don't you take *Firefly*?" Mrs. Harlowe asked. "Dr. Dick and I will not cruise until September this year, and you could live aboard her all summer."

"The very thing," Dr. Dick echoed. "I've got old Mike Costigan aboard her now at Essington. You can take him along to handle her for you."

"Later, perhaps," Alice said. "I should love to cruise on her, but let me get myself together first. Perhaps I'll write you to have Michael bring her down with Marie. But I shall want a few days of perfect quiet with Mrs. Barber before I decide anything."

They drove her to the station and waved farewell to her as the train carried her away to the city. She felt somehow singularly free and revived with the thought that Creedon's marble mausoleum was fading farther and farther into the past with each mile that she traveled. And the prospect that lay ahead brought the color once more to her cheeks and the light of rekindled hope to her eyes. Men looked at her a second time and did not turn away disappointed on that day.

She boarded the night boat for Baltimore.

SHE was awakened in the morning before daybreak. It seemed to her that her head had scarcely touched the pillow when a maid's voice called that they were approaching Chesapeake City. She had not slept so deliciously since that month with the Harlowe's aboard the *Firefly*.

She was the only passenger to disembark in the canal lock. Suit-case in hand, she strolled easily down the

town's main street, now bustling with the awakened populace. It seemed curiously quaint and old-fashioned to her. The big automobiles that dashed madly by were an impious note in the provincial scene but this was the main road from the North to the whole Eastern Shore and was a favorite with motorists.

She climbed the steps of the hotel the lock-tender had pointed out to her as they had passed in the morning. In the shadowy interior she saw a man in flannels and yachting cap, his back toward her, talking to the clerk across the cigar case. She waited for him to finish. He was speaking as she came up, and she overheard the last of his words.

"They'll want you to keep their car in your garage, you know, and have a room for their chauffeur, but they are coming to my yacht at once. I wish you'd see that some one shows them the way in case they arrive before I get back."

The clerk saw Alice and came up to her.

"I want a room and bath for to-night, please," she said.

He wheeled the guest-book around to her.

"Certainly, ma'am," he said. "Will you sign your name?"

Instantly her mind recoiled at the suggestion. She covered her confusion by a leisurely process of removing her glove, but her brain was racing.

She could not sign her real name. Some one who knew the Creedon beast would see it and he would follow her. She did not want to sign even the city that she came from. She wanted to hide herself absolutely with no danger of discovery until her attorney wired her in September that the days of her danger were over.

As she tugged at her glove-fingers, she cast about in her memory for some name from the many books that she had read—any name not common enough to provoke questions of relationship, yet not uncommon enough to cause curiosity. From somewhere in the past she revived one that seemed suitable, and with a firm hand she wrote it. The clerk wheeled the book around and inspected it.

"'Mrs. Blair Coulter of New York?'" he read with an interrogative inflection.

She nodded.

SHE felt the man in the yachting flannels start and peer at her, but she was quite accustomed to having men start and peer at her. She did not even look at him.

"Perhaps you can give me the information I want," she said to the clerk. "I want to go to Mr. Peter Barber's farm at Worton's Cove. Do you know where I can get a boat to take me there? Are there any steamers from here?"

The man scratched his head.

"Well, now," he mused, "I don't b'lieve they is, ma'am. I aint never been down to Worton's, though of course I know where 'tis. But mebbe this gentleman here can help you. He knows the whole Bay. Mr. Oliver Fanshawe, Mrs. Blair Coulter. Mebbe you know each other, though; you're both fr'm Noo Yawk."

The man in the flannels swept the yachting-cap gracefully from his head and bowed. As he straightened up, his eyes took her in with insolent leisure.

"I'm charmed," he murmured to her; and then to the clerk: "No, there are two or three people in New York that I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting. You see, it's somewhat larger than this town, and I'm away a great deal."

His smiling eyes met hers, but she did not smile back. There was something in both his smile and his voice that made her instinctively shrink into herself. It was an unpleasant combination of the leer of the Creedon beast and the oily suavity of her late Uncle Henry Langwell.

"I'm sure I should be very glad to help you," he went on. "And fortunately, it just happens that I can—and without inconveniencing myself in the least."

He smiled again ingratiatingly in spite of the hardness that he must have seen in her eyes. Evidently, like the Creedon beast, he was a man who could not be insulted—when he wanted anything.

"My yacht is here, moored to the dock in Back Creek," he said. "Friends of mine are to arrive in their car this

morning and make a short cruise with me, starting immediately after luncheon. Fortunately, Worton's Cove is to be our anchorage to-night. I should be more than charmed if you would join us. We can set you ashore there in the tender. What do you say?"

"Thank you very much," she answered, but her voice was utterly cold and her attitude so stiffly repellent that he must have seen it. "Unfortunately, I did not intend to start until to-morrow, or possibly even the day after. That is why I engaged a room here for the night."

She turned her back upon him deliberately and spoke again to the clerk about the possibility of hiring a man with a small motor-boat to take her to Worton's. She made up her mind quickly that she would not go that afternoon even if the opportunity presented itself. She would wait until Fanshawe and his yacht were no longer in the Cove. She did not want to know Fanshawe. She knew his type all too well.

"Sam Hoskins's got his fish-nets set down that-a-way somewhere," he said. "He'd oughter be back this afternoon or to-morrow mornin'. He'd be glad to take you down, I'm sure, for the price of the gas'line an' mebbe a bit over to pay him for his time. I'll send word to his house for him to come here as soon's he gits home."

ALICE thanked him and went to her room. She had thought of taking a long walk down the pretty road and across the canal, but she decided to wait until she had made her arrangements for getting to Worton's.

Sam Hoskins, a bronzed and odorous young fisherman, arrived at the hotel as she was finishing her lunch. The bargain was quickly made for the following morning.

"Was you goin' out?" he asked, noting her hat and gloves.

"Yes," she answered, "I thought of taking a walk along the canal."

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I'll go as far as the bridge with you an' show you the boat we'll go in to-morrow."

They walked together down the main

street and around the bend to the draw-bridge. As they came in sight of Back Creek, he cried: "Aint that a beauty of a yacht? That's Oliver Fanshawe's. He's a millionaire from Noo Yawk, an' they do say there's great goin's-on aboard the *Wavecrest* when he takes parties of his friends for a cruise. Gee! There's a party startin' on 'er now."

She was a long, sleek, graceful boat in gleaming white and mahogany and polished brass. Sailors were getting the hawsers aboard as they were cast off, and a captain in uniform at the wheel was calling his orders to them. On the after-deck two women lounged in wicker chairs and two men in flannels stood at the rail. One of them, Alice saw, was Oliver Fanshawe.

He caught sight of her just as she averted her glance. Out of the corners of her eyes she saw that he said something to the two women. One of them picked up a pair of binoculars from a wicker table, deliberately leveled them at her, stared a long time and handed them to the other woman, who repeated the performance. Then Fanshawe said something, slapping his leg with a loud guffaw, and they all laughed boisterously as the yacht got under way.

The whole world suddenly turned bleak and barren in Alice's sight. Life tasted bitter in her mouth. Why, she could not say.

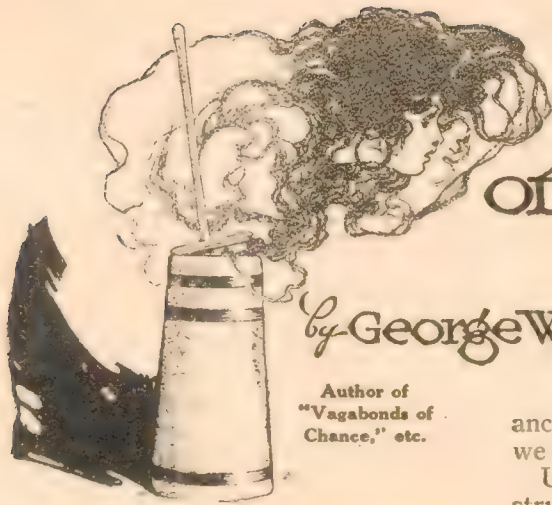
But there was something in the sound of that laughter from the Fanshawe yacht that chilled her blood. Who was this man Fanshawe? Why did the fate that had endowed her with the beauty to attract, so persistently cross her path with Fanshawes and Creedons?

She thought of the blitheness with which she had crossed the bridge that morning. She thought of the little song that had been at her heart, of the smile of delight on her lips, of the flush of sheer joy in her cheeks.

Fanshawe's laugh had chilled her. She listened listlessly as Sam Hoskins pointed out the boat they were to travel in next day. Was it, after all, worth while to travel next day? Was it worth while to travel at all—ever?

She turned back toward the hotel.

The next installment of "Alias Mrs. Blair Coulter" will appear in the June BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—on sale May 1st.



The Jinnee of the Churn

By George Washington Ogden

Author of
"Vagabonds of
Chance," etc.

MR. PHINEAS PACKAGE was a little man in black, who had about him a certain durable cast, lending the impression that he must be incased in a shell. His mustache, amazingly strong at the roots, was trained upward, like a liveryman's, a sheriff's or a king's, and it gave him a very soldierly and competent air.

Mr. Package was an agent in churns—not *of* churns, *for* churns or *with* churns, but *in* churns. That was Mr. Package's own description of his business. His equipment was a pale horse and a buckboard, behind the seat of which he carried the sample churn.

Every two years Mr. Package made it around to canvass the Blue Valley community. For a man might live without a toothbrush,—Mr. Package knew a good many of them who had made it along toward eighty without one,—but no progressive citizen could endure the obloquy of his neighbors which was bound to fall on him if he failed to provide his house with one of Package's ball-bearing churns. That was Mr. Package's argument to obdurate householders.

Men are marrying and giving in marriage; everywhere, all the time, thus creating new business for insurance-agents, sewing-machine-agents, picture-agents and churn-agents. They also die, and take their places in the graveyards, and so stimulate the business of tombstone-agents. But that is the mel-

ancholy side of the picture, with which we have nothing whatever to do.

Unfortunately for Mr. Package, he struck the Blue Valley community, on that particular round, at a bad time. Never before in his experience had he found so many houses with that not-at-home air, the broom in the corner of the kitchen porch, everything as silent as Sunday.

"Organizin'," that's the whole mystery of it," explained Major Grandpa Jennings, when Mr. Package drove in at his place along about noon of the first day in the valley.

"That so?" said Mr. Package. "Bust my hub if I didn't think some kind of disease had cleaned 'em all out between here and Wildwood. What might they be organizin', and who?"

GRANDPA JENNINGS stopped chewing on his tobacco long enough to sneer, sitting on the top step of the kitchen porch, his hands folded over the crook of his hickory cane. "Organizin' for votin', plaguy wimmen-folkses, drat 'em!" said he.

Mr. Package was greatly interested. He leaned toward the sunning patriarch, his whip poised as if to slash the pale horse out of its reverie, his sharp, dry jaw shoved out like a bureau-drawer. "Heh?" said he. "What d'ya mean?"

"Give 'em their votes," said the old man feelingly, "and where'll our pensions be? Huh, they'll take 'em away from us men that fought and shed our blood to save the country, and they'll give 'em to themselves—that's what them wimmen'll be up to. Tell me!"

"You mean the women of this neighborhood are holdin' a meetin' around here somewheres, and organizin' for the suffrage movement?" asked Mr. Package, climbing down out of the buckboard in his excitement.

"Yes, and they'd better be at home doin' their work, dad-span 'em," said Major Grandpa Jennings, spitting vehemently at a bumblebee in the cup of a hollyhock. "Organizin', huh!"

"Where are they at?" asked Mr. Package.

"Picked up the kids and left the men-folks to hustle their dinner any way they could, and drove off to Tanner's Grove to organize," said the old man, shaking his head sadly. "What's this country comin' to, when men'll stand around and leave 'em do that? Maybe we'd better hand it over to the wimmen; they mightn't do no worse."

"Well," marveled the churn man, "so they want votes, and equal rights, and so forth and so on, heh?"

"Wasn't no trouble till that slab-sided June Hinshaw come home from visitin' her sister up to the city. She got full of truck an' notions up there, and when she come home she handed 'em around. June, huh! She aint none of your sweet young things to go around under false pretenses with no such a name like that. Orto be *October*, at the least, and purty well along in the middle of that."

Mr. Package was turning the event over in his fertile mind, trying to fit it into some scheme that would make it profitable to him. "I think I'll drive over to the Grove," he announced. "Reckon there's any show of pickin' up a bite of dinner there?"

"They're makin' a pickernicker out of it," said the old man, "but I don't cal'late they'll make it very warm an' welcome for no man around there to-day."

"Oh, you can't tell," commented Mr. Package easily, turning his horse and driving away.

MR. PACKAGE remembered June Hinshaw. It was not at all likely, indeed, that he ever would forget her, for around the memory of June were twined the dry stalks of his one romance. Six years past he had driven

up to her mother's door in the waning of the day, negotiated a night's lodging and sold a churn before he finished supper.

In the morning June's big blue eyes—they made Mr. Package think of a precious "glassy" that he used to wet in his mouth and admire the fresh colors of behind his book at school—those big blue eyes began to get busy with Mr. Package's homeless heart.

The churn-business was good, and profitable, but it took a man around so much that he never had a chance to be anybody in a community. Mr. Package's desire was to hang up his hat somewhere, get elected justice of the peace or road-overseer and work up from that to the legislature. He knew that the germs of greatness were in him. All he needed was the sun and the soil. And so June.

June laughed at him at the beginning. He was such a nimble, jumpy, springy little man. And June had her ambitions of the heart. They ran along toward a duke or a Ouida hero, a man with shoulders like a wrestler,—and brains to match,—with a big yellow mustache and a sidelong glance.

There was nothing like that in the Blue Valley. So June had settled down to wait. She had been waiting quite a spell when Mr. Package appeared, six years ago. Six years do not sweeten either the heart or the lips of a lady when they are added to twenty-nine.

But Mr. Package had given June a chance every two years. He had driven around faithfully in the dusk of the day, remained overnight and renewed his offer. He had produced his bank-book and given other proof that he had the sidelong-glancing heroes skinned a mile when it came to the pressing necessities of life.

June wanted harmony in her life, and poetry and such. She couldn't see either harmony or poetry in churns, or a man whose fortunes were founded on them. So June waited, but time did not sit still beside her. Mr. Package knew that. He knew it very well.

"She'll be getting more anxious all the time," reflected Mr. Package as he drove along toward Tanner's Grove. That she was just about anxious enough

to yield to his entreaties Mr. Package believed from the symptoms. When an unmarried lady of thirty-five took up politics and tried to become a leader, said Mr. Package, it indicated that hope in other directions had grown exceedingly dim.

"Well, I've been getting older too, every turn of the wheels," he sighed. "I aint ahead of her any on that."

ON the fringe of the gathering in the grove Mr. Package found a few forlorn and neglected men. One and all, they looked as homeless and depressed as if they had come in from the fields, found the house locked—and a notice of divorce-suit under the kitchen door. They leaned against trees and talked with Mr. Package with the dispirited drooping that is characteristic of conquered men.

The work of organization was proceeding. There was a large-waisted lady from the city, who had a nose like a financier and a complexion like Pain-killer, into whose hands the ladies of the community had placed the lines of the occasion. With a high hand she was driving, rough-shod, over the historic and long-guarded prerogatives of men. June was on the platform, in some sort of secretarial capacity, writing things down seriously.

Mr. Package was a believer in the right of suffrage for women. But like many another old-fashioned chap, he held that it was a thing that the gallantry of man should yield, without unseemly agitation or undignified asking on the ladies' part. Hand it to them on a silver dish, with hat in hand, a smile and a bow. That was the idea of Mr. Package.

So Mr. Package believed that if he could arise in that gathering and express himself, he might do a good turn not only for the ladies' cause but for his patent ball-bearing churns as well.

Speakers were not wanting, and Mr. Package held his peace until he felt that his moment had arrived. Then he stood up, his hand in the bosom of his coat like the pictures of Henry Clay, and begged the privilege of the platform, as one in sympathy with the movement, from the very bottom of his heart.

MR. PACKAGE was largely recognized by the women of Blue Valley together assembled. With recognition came applause. June, from her station on the platform, blushed, nodding her head in greeting and encouragement.

"Madam Chairlady, and ladies of Blue Valley—" began Mr. Package. He waded right into his speech, baring his sentiments without regard for the timid men who came edging within hearing from among the trees. Mr. Package gave it to them strong, and applause gladdened his periods. When he believed that he had handed out to the ladies as much as was good for their vanity, Mr. Package veered off on the tack which brought him up to the patent churn.

Mr. Package deplored the inequality of opportunity which had been the lot of the ladies through the centuries; he deplored the selfishness of man, which permitted him to buy the most modern machinery for saving labor in his fields, and allowed his wife to plug along in her kitchen with no more conveniences than her grandmother enjoyed. The absence of labor-saving devices in the households of American wives was shameful, Mr. Package declared.

"As an example," said he, "I can produce figures from an unquestionable source to prove that the average farmer's wife spends nine years of her life at the churn. Consider that, ladies. Tied to a churn-dasher, going through those slow, monotonous, laborious, soul-deadening movements for nine precious years of her life!

"And what are her rewards for this drudgery? If allowed the full returns of her labor,—which, alas, she is not!—her compensation would not amount to twenty cents a day for those nine miserable years—less than the pay of a Mexican peon, about equal to that of a Chinese cooly.

"To-day you have struck the first blow for emancipation and independence. Signalize this movement, make it historic in Blue Valley, by throwing off the shackles of household drudgery. I am proud to be the humble instrument which can be used to further that grand emancipation.

"Ladies, I beg your permission to call your attention to that grand, that humanitarian, invention, Package's ball-bearing, patent churn, which reduces the time of butter-making from thirty to three and one-fourth minutes.

"Go one step farther than you have gone to-day in drawing up these declarations, this memorial to your law-makers. Mark this as an historical turning-point in the march toward liberty by the housewives of America, by giving me your orders for this humanitarian invention, by which the labor of butter-making is turned into a delight and a pleasure, by which the wan cheek is lighted with a glow of enjoyment as the housewife works the smooth-moving levers which twirl the dasher at the rate of seven thousand revolutions per minute—"

Mr. Package would have said more, probably without a period or a pause, for he was just beginning to unwind himself on the subject of the churn. But June arose. She came up with a swish and a spattering of foolscap leaves from her table, like an indignant Aphrodite, popping up fully robed, shedding drops of paper around her.

"Madam President, I protest!" she cried, high and shrill above the good baritone voice of Mr. Package. "This man is out of order; this is not the time nor the place to bring in business of that sort!"

Mr. Package began a mild, even a humble, apology. But the presiding lady brushed him off the platform with an imperious gesture and proceeded to skin him, as neatly and as smartly as ever a man was skinned by words.

BUT Mr. Package moved among the delegates, soft of foot, softer of word, trying to nail up a few orders. Show the men that they meant to be self-standing, said Mr. Package. Put in a churn to do that hard old job that had put a crook in more than one comely back that he could name. Start the movement by doing something that the men would remember; it was their money, just as much as the man's. If freedom was a good thing in one way, it was better in another. Buy a churn, put your order down right now, and

don't say a word about it until it is delivered. And so on.

No—nothing doing for the patent churn. Mr. Package seemed to have bungled, somewhere, and killed his chance. If June had kept out of it, he could have rounded up fifty orders. Plague take a woman like that! She ought to have a strong, cool-headed man to look after her, blame it all!

The way they snubbed Mr. Package and his patent churn was almost cruel. They humiliated him by turning their backs; they made comments on his brazen insincerity; they sniffed. Mr. Package believed he was done for in Blue Valley for a long time to come.

Then June got up and made a speech. What was that she was saying?

"As far as men are concerned, economically, we could dispense with them, wipe them off the face of the earth," said June, sweeping her arm around as if eliminating men in general and Mr. Package in particular. "We could conduct the affairs of this government without men as well as we could with them," she declared. And on hearing this the ladies cheered. Perhaps it never had occurred to them before.

June ought to know, if anybody did, they said. She'd never had a man either to help or hinder her.

Mr. Package listened to that speech with a sad expression, shaking his head many times. When the meeting broke up, he hitched up his pale horse, turned its head in the direction that his heart had traveled every day of all the unnumbered days of the waiting past and drove straight for Miss June Hinshaw's home.

They sat on the front porch after supper and had it out. Mr. Package was not a meek man. He might look meek on occasion, and act the part if it would sell a churn, but in his heart he was as high-strung as an Oregon bronco that never had felt the saddle. So he didn't approach Miss June Hinshaw on his knees, but he gave her some rough handling, verbally, on the matter of that speech. June had her come-back on account of the underhanded manner in which he tried to run business in on them. If words could have struck fire, that little porch would have been illu-

minated, for they came out of hardened hearts, and they bounced off of hardened hearts, each party to the argument determined on humbling and taming the other to an admission of fault.

It ended in a row which Mrs. Hinshaw tried vainly to avert. June said she never wanted to see him again. He said he reckoned there were others who might not hold the same view.

Go and deceive them, and blarney them, and mislead them, the silly fools, said June. She said it with a shake in her voice, and she went into the house, leaving Mr. Package with the impression that she was crying, and rather glad in his hard heart that she was.

IN the morning at breakfast they renewed the controversy. Women were superior, in all points, to men, said June; and the failure of his poor, pitiful, underhanded attempt to work on their supposed weakness at the meeting ought to be proof enough for him that they were. She had seen through him; she had checkmated him and bottled up his selfish little scheme.

Saying so didn't prove it, avowed Mr. Package. Before he left that neighborhood he'd show her that she'd have to get up pretty early in the morning, and stay awake all day, to head *him* off.

Prove it, challenged June.

All right, accepted Mr. Package.

He drove off with his pale horse and dusty buckboard, and June went into her room and cried.

Mr. Package left his sample-churn with Major Grandpa Jennings and started out to gather proof of man's superiority in intelligence, cunning, strategy and statesmanship over the female of the race. He found the ground well prepared for the work in hand.

The men of Blue Valley were as sullen as deep water. They hadn't got over that organization picnic, and the tales told by the few meek ones who were permitted to attend. If that kind of a thing went on, said the philosophers who were able to put their thoughts into words, they, the men, would be in the kitchens, and their wives would be in the fields.

The women would be handling the money and selling the hogs—and maybe

chewing tobacco. Something orto be done, by ganny; that's what orto be.

That was the idea, said Mr. Package, catching up the smoldering temper of the lords of the earth in that spot. Do something. Get together and organize a counter movement. Stop that dangerous trend of thought among the women, which would lead to anarchy and disorder if allowed to run wild. Mr. Package went among them not as an agent in churns, but as a man with a light.

You could all see, gentlemen, said he, that he was sincere in the matter of helping that community out from under the shadow of a great peril. Where was his churn-business in comparison with a thing like that? Nowhere—that was the answer. It was like a call to arms, when a man drops everything and goes. Meet in the schoolhouse Saturday night, said Mr. Package, and make plans to stamp out the growing fire of insurrection in the kitchens of their sacred American homes.

Mr. Package went about like a messenger carrying the flaming cross, calling the clans to the meeting set for Saturday night. Men only, was the word, and keep it to yourselves.

Mutterings arose in the valley. Dang that June Hinshaw for meddlin' in men's business, anyhow. Something orto be done with that woman. She orto be took up.

THE Saturday night meeting was a great success, from the point of attendance. Mr. Package was in the chair, and more or less fragmentary ideas were jerkily presented by broad-handed men who for the greater part didn't understand it, but who felt that the placidity and the routine of their lives were threatened by the move of the women for votes.

It was the word "organization" that frightened them. It sounded as if they were getting up an anti-horsethief league, or a grange. Maybe it would lead to plotting for divorces, strikes against cooking for harvest-hands, demands for hired girls. They talked it over in their groping way, and then Mr. Package yielded the chair to another while he stepped forward to make a few remarks.

Mr. Package let it be known that he was for votes for the ladies, and for everything else that would make them happier, lovelier and more at ease among the perils and trials of this hard-traveling life. He said that, and he said it very well for an agent in churns.

Almost everybody nodded, agreeing harmoniously. But how about this organizing business? one wanted to know. What was the reason for that sort of procedure?

Mr. Package was of the opinion that it was a symptom—rather than an ailment which had struck deep. It was the murmuring before the revolt, a turning and tossing before the fever. By applying the proper remedy, said Mr. Package, this dangerous malady might be conquered at the very start.

He had attended the meeting in the grove, as many of them knew. He had heard the speeches, the expressions of the mind. What had struck him as the keynote of the whole thing was the universal complaint of the hard, the unequally hard, lot of the women. They had called attention to the modern machinery—Mr. Package named no names—which the men employed to lighten their labors in the fields; they had spoken of riding-cultivators, of motor-plows.

Coming down to the sifted bottom, said Mr. Package, the women were about to revolt against the conditions to which the unseeing men had bound them. They wanted machinery in the kitchen, as well as in the fields; they wanted ball-bearing appliances to lighten the labor there as much as the husbands wanted them for handling the wheat.

ALL of this led up to the patent churn. Mr. Package was proud to announce that he was the humble instrument through which this sectional revolution of the women, which might—nay was almost certain to—grow into a nation-wide rebellion—the humble instrument through which this dangerous uprising which threatened our proud American homes might be allayed, calmed, soothed into peace.

Diplomacy was the word; secrecy was the pass-whisper. The wise man

locked his stable before the horse was stolen—and all that. Let every man of them put down his order for one of Package's ball-bearing, labor-saving, world-patented churns—a churn which turned the work of butter-making into pleasure, which preserved the bloom of youth in the cheeks of wives and daughters, which returned dollars for cents invested. Let no man say a word about it until the machine was landed on the kitchen-floor on the day of delivery, and then he might step proudly forth, his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, inflate his chest and pat his wife on the head, saying: "I have done this because I love you!"

All old Package ball-bearing churns would be taken in at a liberal allowance, Mr. Package announced. And there was the simple, the human, the logical way of putting down the threatened rebellion of the women of Blue Valley. Was there a man among them with a heart so small that he would hang back and see his wife whet her soul away with the chafing churn-dasher of the old-style trap, when he could transport her to the threshold of paradise for seventeen dollars? Take your notes, gentlemen, if you don't want to pay till you sell your wheat. Fix it up any way to please you. But remember the patient wives at home, remember the fading bloom upon their cheeks. Remember all that, and a great deal more.

Forty-seven orders resulted from that night's work. Mr. Package drove away from the schoolhouse feeling very comfortable. He had lost sight of the thing that he had started out to prove to June Hinshaw—namely: the superiority of the male intelligence over that of the female of the race.

MR. PACKAGE woke up the next morning thinking. The wider awake he grew, the more solemnly he thought. For it had occurred to Mr. Package that he had failed to prove his case.

His enthusiasm following the flood of orders the night before began to wane, to pale; it grew ghastly and cold; it died. He had succeeded only in proving that men were more gullible than

women. His experience had established the fact that the men of Blue Valley, far from having more brains than the women, hadn't enough to ballast them against a March wind.

By cajolery and cheap oratory, and raising up the image of a danger which existed only in his own imagination, he had won the men to what the women had rejected with scorn.

Mr. Package felt that all concerned in the meeting would become the objects of ridicule and scorn for the ladies, not of Blue Valley alone, but of the world. It seemed time for him to be moving along to another field. The forty-seven churns he could ship to the men who ordered them, and make his collections by mail. A Blue Valley promise was as good as gold.

But Mr. Package could not tear himself away without seeing June and renewing again the standing offer of six years. All the hardness in his heart, due to the hot controversy, had vanished. In the place of it he had the memory of her big blue eyes, like wet glassies, and that memory was fringed all around with melancholy. For the first time in those six years he had doubt about what the outcome would be.

Well, he had to see her and make it up. June had to be married, somehow or other. Mr. Package took the road to the Hinshaw home, where June and her mother lived alone, with a hired man to do the field-work and the chores.

All fuddled, and not at all relishing the surrender that he feared he should have to make, Mr. Package hitched his horse and entered the gate. Nobody

around the front of the house, no answer to his knock. Mr. Package went around to the back, walking silently over the long grass, which would look so much better, he thought, if there was a handy man with a lawn-mower around there to run over it twice a week.

THERE was June, hovering over the chopping block at the woodpile, a live chicken in one hand, the ax in the other. She was standing there meditatively, as if considering whether to cut off the bird's head or let it go.

The chicken was tightly bound, legs and wings, leaving nothing free but its neck. Another, similarly trussed, lay near June's feet. She put down the one she was holding and took up the other. The neck of this one she fitted upon the block carefully, where it held it, foolishly, as a doomed chicken always does.

Mr. Package drew nearer, shielding himself behind a tall clump of lilacs. June lifted the ax, turned her head away from the victim of the sacrifice, closed her eyes.

Mr. Package trembled for her safety, drawing up his own toes within his shoes. But the ax did not descend. June opened her eyes, put down that chicken, took up the other.

Mr. Package smiled behind his hand.

Again June made her deadly preparations; again the ax was lifted, her head averted, her eyes closed. Again the blow was stayed, the bound fowl placed on the ground near her feet and the other one exchanged for it. She fitted its neck to the block, dropping the

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The Jinnee of the Churn

By George Washington Ogden

ax as she pressed its inquisitive head down.

The chicken, perhaps led to the belief that this was some sort of friendly exercise for its own good, chuckled comfortably in its half-grown voice. June put it down, straightening her very nice back with a little shudder.

"Oh!" she said with a little shiver.

"June," called Mrs. Hinshaw distantly, as if the kitchen doors and windows were all shut and she behind them, "have you done it?"

"Not quite," answered June, bending to the ax again. Once more she picked up a fowl, placing its neck on the block. The chicken lifted its head with the perky, knowing trick which a chicken has, and looked her in the face with one bright, life-radiating eye. Mr. Package was not ten feet away. He saw it all.

June dropped the ax. She hadn't the heart even to lift the ax against that inquiring, friendly eye. Mr. Package had trouble with his diaphragm to keep it from expelling a laugh. But he managed, his hand over his mouth.

"Ju-ne," called the far-off voice of Mrs. Hinshaw again, "have you *done* it?"

"No," answered June irritably, putting the chicken down, "and I'm not going to!"

MR. PACKAGE heard the kitchen door open, and he edged around a little to keep out of sight. "Well, I'll go over and ask Mr. Owens to do it," said Mrs. Hinshaw. "I told that triffin' Jim Sawyer to kill them chickens before he went off fishin' and that's the way he done it! Here it is past ten, and the minister and his wife comin' to dinner."

"I—I can't help it," said June faintly, "I just *can't* do it."

"I knew you couldn't," said her mother rather triumphantly, as one who exults over another with whom she has had a controversy. "There never was a woman on either side of the family that could kill a chicken. It's all I can

do to cut one up after it's killed. Well, I'll run over and see if I can get Mr. Owens to—"

"If you will permit me to officiate," offered Mr. Package, stepping forth from his place of concealment.

"Laws!" said Mrs. Hinshaw, hurrying back into the kitchen. Mr. Package picked up the ax. June prepared to scoot into the kitchen after her mother, when Mr. Package spoke.

"You might be able to run the government without men, June," said he, "but you'd go mighty hungry for fried chicken."

"It's a brute's work," said June, blushing terribly as she yielded her place at the sacrificial block.

"Of course it is," admitted Mr. Package cheerfully. "It's one of the several disagreeable things in this world that has to be done, and nobody around to do it but a man."

"Savage!" said June, laughing a little, a light in her eyes that made the going clear for Mr. Package and warmed the last fearsome corner of his heart.

"Sure," agreed Mr. Package. "Organize, agitate, vote; vote early and often, as they say; but don't get too far away from the reach of the strong arm of man. There's a certain amount of what you might call dirty-work, such as fighting the battles, and that kind of stuff, that nobody but a man's low enough to do. Hang onto the strong arm of man, June; you'll need him around once in a while."

"I—I guess you're right, Phineas," said she meekly. "When you've done—that,"—June shuddered, turning her head—"you must put your horse in the barn and stay for dinner."

Mr. Package was standing there in the glow of confidence, a chicken in one hand, the ax in the other. He made an assertive, masterly flourish with both of them, trying to catch June's eye.

"I'll stay longer than that, too," he declared.

"Just as you say, Phineas," agreed June, running for the kitchen door.

"The Breath of Topheth," another fine story by George Washington Ogden, will appear in an early issue of THE BLUE BOOK.

Away from Here

by
Ellis Parker Butler



THE weather was so hot that the asphalt of Riverside Drive gave forth a bituminous odor, and as Grandma Bunker crossed the celebrated Drive to find a cool seat facing the River, her feet seemed to sink into the asphalt. There seemed danger, if the hot spell continued much longer, that the asphalt would become entirely liquid and run down the Drive in a rushing torrent. It was awful weather for the poor people cooped up in the tenements. The various newspapers supporting various "ice-funds" did not let the well-to-do forget this; there were a great many photographs of the heat-stricken poor published about that time. Dear old Grandma Bunker loved these pictures. They made her weep; they touched her heart.

She crossed the Drive, found a seat, took out her knitting and looking up, discovered that the man in the seat beside her was no other than Mr. Trebbs.

"Well, I declare!" she exclaimed. "If it aint Mr. Trebbs! Aint it awful hot! When I think of them poor folks in the tenements, I just feel so bad I could cry."

"Yes, ma'am," said Mr. Trebbs, closing the book he was reading but leaving his finger between the pages as a mark.

Mr. Trebbs was a fine-looking man. Always neatly dressed, he had the intellectual face of a clergyman and the beautiful gray hair of an elderly man. He was a newcomer at Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house, but Mrs. Bunker had taken to him at once. The only thing

that marred his beauty was a peculiarity of one eye; at the outer corner of the left eye, the skin just above the upper lid was drawn down as if it had been cut loose and sewed tight again too far down. This was the fact. It gave that eye a queer, almost sinister appearance. Mr. Trebbs had already explained to Mrs. Bunker that this had happened when he was a missionary to the Fiji Islands. A spear thrown by a native had clipped him just above the eye, he explained, and the crude native surgery had left this mark.

As a matter of fact, Droop-Eye McGosh—for so he had been known in the old days—had received the cut by being hit over the eye with a heavy beer-mug in a barroom mix-up during which he shot Mike McGinnis. Not knowing whether Mike would live or die, Droop-Eye had gone into temporary hiding, and his good friend and pal Red Finnerty had sewed up the eye as best he could.

"When I think of them poor people down in the tenements," said dear old Grandma Bunker, beginning to knit, "I wisht I had a whole mountain of ice to give to them."

Mr. Trebbs drew a deep breath and slipped the book into his pocket.

"I've got—" he began, and then he stopped. "I've got the same feeling, ma'am," he said. "If I wasn't a poor man—"

He did not say what he would have done if he had not been a poor man. He glanced at Grandma Bunker, and seeing she was intent on her knitting, he opened the book again and read silently.

THE book, which had been at first a disappointment, had suddenly become interesting to Mr. Trebbs. From time to time he raised his eyes from the pages and let them rest thoughtfully on the river or the New Jersey shore. Now and then a smile twitched the corners of his mouth.

For twenty years Mr. Trebbs had been a "retired" gentleman, doing no work in the line that had once made him a rather famous character in the world of semicriminals. He was now sixty years old, but even at forty he had known he was "through." For fifteen years, between the ages of twenty-five and forty, Droop-Eye McGosh had been a very fair bunco-man. He had never been anything remarkable. He did the easier and simpler varieties of bunco-work in the simple-minded country districts at a time when almost any child could have sold a gold brick to a farmer.

Such fame as Droop-Eye McGosh gained was as a money-saver. He was the stingiest bunco-man in America; when he got a dollar, he hung onto ninety cents of it forever, with the result that his other nickname was "Stingy Joe." Fully twenty years before he seated himself on the bench facing the Hudson River this hot summer day, Droop-Eye had given up the bunco-business in disgust. He had enough to live on if he was careful of his means, and he admitted to himself that the bunco-game was too swift for him. He retired not because he wanted to, but because he was such a poor hand at the business that it did not pay.

Some idea of how softened and tame Mr. Trebbs (so to call him, since that was the name he had been wearing for twenty years) had become may be had from the fact that he really enjoyed living in middle-class boarding-houses and that his favorite dessert was stewed prunes. Unless his napkin was a little damp, he felt depressed. He loved tall black-walnut folding-beds and slept best

in those that squeaked a little. He had grown to detest a full, flaring gas-light and always carried a little ball of putty in his pocket so that if his bedroom gas-jet burned too brilliantly he could putty it up a little. He was particularly fond of hall-bedrooms that looked out on backs of other buildings, and he was happiest if there was a squeaky pulley at one end or the other of one or more of the endless clotheslines in the back yards adjacent to his window. He read Stockton's stories over and over and over, and when he wished poetry, he read "Lucille."

THE book Mr. Trebbs was reading was a library-book, and one of Stockton's, and the story he had been reading when Mrs. Bunker interrupted him was "My Terminal Moraine." Now he turned to Mrs. Bunker again.

"What you said just now about a mountain of ice, Mrs. Bunker," he said, "made me smile. Maybe you noticed that I smiled."

"Land sakes, no!" said Mrs. Bunker. "I wasn't noticin'."

"Well, it did," said Mr. Trebbs. "It was funny, because you said you wished you had a mountain of ice just when I was reading about one in this book. Or if it wasn't a mountain of ice, it was a cave of ice—a solid cave of ice—what you might call a buried mountain of ice. It seems, according to this Stockton—"

Mrs. Bunker had dropped a stitch and she was not giving Mr. Trebbs very close attention.

"Stockton, California, did you say it was at?" she asked pleasantly. "I've got a cousin in California, close to Stockton."

"No, ma'am. You didn't understand me," said Mr. Trebbs. "I didn't say there was a mountain of ice at Stockton, California. I said—"

"I thought 'twasn't likely it would be in California," said Mrs. Bunker. "I hear tell it is hot out there, and the ice would be most likely melted by now. Whereabouts is it?"

"Well, ma'am," said Mr. Trebbs, "I should say it was in New Jersey."

Mrs. Bunker looked across toward the New Jersey shore. Her eyes were too poor to see that far very clearly,

but she knew it must be hot over there too.

"It seems sort of hot over there for ice not to melt, too," she ventured. "If you was to say at the North Pole, or up in Alaska—"

"Well, maybe you don't understand," said Mr. Trebbs. "It isn't a mountain of ice sticking up in the air. It's what they call a terminal moraine, ma'am. You see, there was a cave,—a big cave,—and a long time ago, ages ago, a glacier came down across this country, and when it came to the cave, it fell into it. It fell in—millions of tons of glacier-ice—and got covered up and stayed there ever since. And this man—"

"Millions of tons of ice!" exclaimed Mrs. Bunker. "And right over there in New Jersey!"

"A regular ice-mine," said Mr. Trebbs. "Enough ice to last New York for fifty years. And cheap, you know! All you have to do is dig it out."

Mrs. Bunker knit awhile in silence.

"Mr. Trebbs," she asked presently, "why did you think you had to go as missionary to the Fiji Islands when there is so much suffering right here in New York?"

"Well, ma'am," said Mr. Trebbs uneasily, for he hated to deceive the dear, innocent-minded old lady, "I didn't know any better then."

He disliked to talk about his imaginary Fiji Island experiences with Mrs. Bunker—she was such a sweet old soul. It made him feel guilty. He arose now and prepared to move away rather than talk about it. Mrs. Bunker knit rapidly, and her heart beat as rapidly as her needles clicked.

"Well, there's just one thing I want to say," she said meaningly. "If I owned an ice-mine, I'd see that there wasn't so much tenement suffering for want of ice."

"Yes. Well, I've got to be going," said Mr. Trebbs, and he went.

WHEN Mrs. Bunker returned to her room in the boarding-house later in the afternoon, her husband was already there. He was trying to be comfortable and was in his shirt-sleeves and stocking-feet, and he was waving a palm-leaf fan. Mr. Bunker did not fret

because he was wasting an afternoon. The dear old chubby-faced soul felt that he had a right to an afternoon off when he pleased, for he had made a great deal of money in his new profession. When he had grown tired of buying gold bricks from bunco-men in Oroduna, Iowa, and had—in looking around for a clean, honest business in which to embark—decided, with his wife's consent, to become a bunco-man, he had had no idea money could be made as easily as he had been making it in the great city of New York.

The bank cashier at Orodung was right in advising him, to come to New York, where the easy marks are clustered at the end of every telephone-wire and up every flight of stairs and thronged in the streets. The dear old man had beamed good-naturedly upon all New York, and fully believing he was engaged in an honest and well-recognized profession, had taken money from many New Yorkers as easily as he could have picked apples from the old apple-tree back home.

"Jabez," said Mrs. Bunker as she put aside her bonnet, "aint you made a lot of money since we come to New York?"

"I have so, Ma," Mr. Bunker chuckled. "Spiles of it. Seems like it comes so easy it is almost a shame to take it. Yes, Ma, I've made quite a heap."

Mrs. Bunker looked out of the open window.

"Pa," she said, turning her head, "what's your idea of Mr. Trebbs? Aint he sort of simple-minded?"

"Mr. Trebbs? Lands of mercy, yes, Ma! I dare say he was a right bright man in his day, but he is failin' fast, I reckon. D'you ever see him eat prunes, Ma? When a man gets so he really and truly enjoys eatin' boarding-house prunes—"

Mrs. Bunker looked out of the window again.

"For the poor folks in the tenements!" she said softly.

"What say?" asked Mr. Bunker.

"Nothin'! Nothin', Pa," said Mrs. Bunker. "I was just mutterin' to myself. I reckon we'd better be goin' down to dinner."

IT was after dinner, when Mr. Trebbs was leaving the dining-room, that Mrs. Bunker touched him on the arm and looked him full in the face with her faded blue eyes.

"Could you talk to me a minute in the parlor?" she asked pleadingly.

Mr. Trebbs inwardly cursed the mad impulse that had once made him tell Mrs. Bunker that he had been a missionary.

"I'm rather busy," he said. "I've got an engagement—"

"I wunt be takin' much of your time," Mrs. Bunker said. "I just want to ask a word or two."

Mr. Trebbs crossed the hall and entered the parlor. Mrs. Bunker looked back and saw that her husband was still talking with Mrs. Wimmer.

"Set down," she said. "I been thinkin' about that ice-mine of yourn."

"But—but—" stammered Mr. Trebbs.

"You needn't be frightened all of a sudden," said Mrs. Bunker gently. "I aint goin' to ask you to give it to me, Mr. Trebbs. I don't know how well off you are for worldly goods, and I guess it aint none of my business. Some has more than others has. And some has more forwardness in askin' others to give than I have. I dare say there is plenty of ladies wouldn't mind askin' you right out to give the whole ice-mine to the poor, but I aint ever had the cheek to ask things like that. I ain't much of an asker, Mr. Trebbs. I always used to tell Mis' Cossick, out home: 'I'll make a cake and cook three pies, and be glad to do so, but don't ask me to ask anybody for money.' I can't do it." No sir, I aint no hand to beg."

"Ah—ah—" said Mr. Trebbs.

"And I'm glad to say," continued Mrs. Bunker, "that me and Jabez is always ready to do our part when it comes to askin' others to do theirs. We aint so poor but what we can."

She smoothed the silk skirt of her gown with modest pride.

"Not but what I'd want you to do all you could, yourself," she went on, "for it is more blessed to give than to receive. You'd want to, anyway."

"I don't understand," faltered Mr. Trebbs.

"I'm comin' to that," said Mrs. Bunker. "You havin' been a missionary shows you've got a good heart and would want to do your share—for the poor folks in them hot tenements, I mean. Maybe you'd want to knock off half the price, and maybe you couldn't feel you could afford to knock off so much. That's for you to say."

"But—but what is it?" asked Mr. Trebbs.

"That ice-mine of yourn over in Jersey," said Mrs. Bunker. "I been thinkin' what a blessing it would be if Jabez and me could just buy it and say to them poor folks in the tenements: 'Here's an ice-mine; whoever wants to can come and get all they want, and there wont be a cent of charge to nobody!'"

Mr. Trebbs stared at Mrs. Bunker open-mouthed.

"You—you want to buy an ice-mine? You—you want to buy *my* ice-mine?"

"Of course you been countin' on makin' a lot of money out of it," Mrs. Bunker hastened to say. "I know it is sort of sudden, my speakin' about it this way, but I want the poor to get some use of it whilst the hot-weather spell is on. All I say is think it over! Think it over, and think what a lot of good it would do them poor folks in the tenements, and then let me know how much you'd cut the price to me and Jabez, considerin' that what you cut is your gift to the poor folks."

SHE arose and left him, and Mr. Trebbs sat staring at the opposite side of the room, seeing nothing. Now and then he gasped, and his long, thin hands opened and closed convulsively. She wanted to buy an ice-mine! She had so misunderstood him that she thought he owned an ice-mine! And she wanted to buy it!

He turned his head cautiously and saw Mr. Bunker still in converse with Mrs. Wimmer, his baby-bald head shining in the light and his baby-blue eyes innocent of guile. Mr. Trebbs gasped again. It beat anything in his experience. Once he had had a farmer come driving furiously after him to buy a gold brick he had just refused to buy, fearful lest it should be sold to some

more fortunate man, but never had he had anyone invent a mine and then offer to buy it. He was stunned. He could not believe he was awake. He folded his right fist and hit himself sharply twice on the side of the jaw. No doubt of it; he was awake!

Immediately a tremendous fear attacked Mr. Trebbs. He had been such a poor bunco-man, such a raw hand at confidence-games! Why, he had been forced to quit the game because he was such a duffer at it! And that was twenty years ago. For twenty years he had not trimmed one sucker; he was out of practice; he had lost his nerve. He groaned.

Mr. Bunker, passing the door, heard Mr. Trebbs groan and stepped into the parlor.

"Feelin' sick?" he asked kindly.

"No, no!" said Mr. Trebbs hastily. "Capital!"

"Lots of folks the same way," said Mr. Bunker cheerfully. "Plenty of good schemes drop through because of want of it."

"Of what?" asked Mr. Trebbs. "Of want of what?"

"Capital," said Mr. Bunker. "What you need capital for, if it aint none of my business?"

Mr. Trebbs swallowed. He wet his dry lips.

"It's an ice-mine," he said hastily, frightened even as he said the words. "I—I discovered an ice-mine—in New Jersey."

"Well, now," said Mr. Bunker with interest as he seated himself on the edge of a chair opposite Mr. Trebbs, "there ought to be good money in an ice-mine. What sort of an ice-mine is it?"

MOISTENING his lips frequently, for he was a badly frightened man, Mr. Trebbs gave Mr. Bunker a description of an ice-mine from Mr. Stockton's story. He was ready, at the least sign of scoffing, to make a joke of the whole thing, but Mr. Bunker did not scoff. He listened intently until Mr. Trebbs finished.

"I vum!" he exclaimed. "I shouldn't wonder if there was a lot of them ice-mines, if a feller only knew where to look for them. Now, you take out there in Iowa near Oroduna. There's a strip

of coral out there runs across the Mississippi River and back through the country and across the Iowa River, and all that was the bottom of the ocean once, or there wouldn't be any coral there, would there? And suppose an iceberg was a-floatin' on that ocean just when the land begun to rise. And suppose the iceberg settled into the soft ocean mud and stayed there. There'd be another ice-mine right there. If I owned that farm of mine, I swan to goodness I'd test it to see if there was an ice-mine under it. But I don't own it. I sold it."

"Too bad!" said Mr. Trebbs huskily.

"Aint it?" agreed Mr. Bunker. "How much capital do you need?"

Mr. Trebbs drew a deep breath.

"If I had a couple of hundred dollars spare cash," he said hurriedly, "I could uncover enough ice to show folks what the mine is. I'd get capital easy enough then."

"Aint you even got two hundred dollars?" asked Mr. Bunker with surprise. Mr. Trebbs dressed like a man who had more than two hundred dollars.

"Well, you see," said Mr. Trebbs hesitatingly, with his eyes on Mr. Bunker's face, "my wife only gives me a little—only twenty dollars a week—because we parted when I went to the Fiji Islands, and I've been saving up to buy the lot—"

"What lot?" asked Mr. Bunker.

"The lot over in Jersey," said Mr. Trebbs, "—the lot the ice-mine is on. And to build the house."

"What house?" Mr. Bunker asked.

"The house I'm going to build—was going to build," explained Mr. Trebbs. "The house the men were digging the foundation-trenches for when they ran into the ice. They were digging down, and they struck ice."

"You look sick," said Mr. Bunker suddenly, for Mr. Trebbs did look sick. "You'd better go upstairs and lay down awhile, and maybe you can tell me all about it some other time."

MR. TREBBS was vastly relieved when Mr. Bunker said this and went away. He had been in a panic every moment and regretted that he had even thought of working a confidence-

game. He resolved to have nothing more to do with it.

Mr. Bunker, climbing the stairs, thought:

"He's got a big thing and he knows he has, and he is scared to death for fear somebody will get it away from him. And I reckon I will."

While Mr. Bunker sat in his rocking-chair in his room, gently swinging to and fro and planning some means by which he could bunco Mr. Trebbs out of his ice-mine, Mrs. Bunker sat near him in her own rocking-chair, knitting steadily and now and then casting a loving glance at Mr. Bunker. She was wondering whether she had courage to ask the dear old soul to spend more money for charity than she had ever asked him to spend for anything. In his hall-bedroom Mr. Trebbs was sitting on the edge of his unfolded folding-bed, with his head in his hands, trying to avoid temptation—not because he wished to be guiltless, but because he was afraid he would make an awful botch of temptation's result if he tried his hand at it.

"No! I can't do it!" he moaned at last. "I don't dare!"

Just about then Mrs. Bunker got out of her chair and after giving Mr. Bunker a gentle love-pat on the top of his dear old head, left their room. She walked down one flight and tapped on Mr. Trebbs' door.

"Who is there?" asked Mr. Trebbs.

"Mis' Bunker. Kin I come in a minute?"

Mr. Trebbs opened the door. Without ceremony Mrs. Bunker entered the room and closed the door behind her.

"I don't know whether you've been thinking over what I said or not," said Mrs. Bunker, "but I've been. I've been settin' upstairs alongside of Jabez and tryin' to get up spunk enough to ask him to buy your ice-mine and give it to me to give to them poor folks in the tenements, but every time I thought I had my spunk up, I sort of got scared of asking him, because I aint no hand at tellin' about things I aint seen. If I want Jabez to buy me a dress, it aint no use for me to try and tell him what it is like; I got to take him to see it. And goodness knows, I'm a lot better hand at describing a dress than I am at de-

scribing an ice-mine, when I aint hardly got a notion what an ice-mine is. Have you thought how much you would throw off the cost of that mine on account of Jabez buyin' it for charity?"

"N-no," faltered Mr. Trebbs.

"Well, would it be a thousand dollars you'd throw off, or five thousand or ten thousand?" insisted Mrs. Bunker. "Would you throw off five thousand dollars?"

The perspiration stood out on Mr. Trebbs' forehead.

"Yes—yes'm," he stammered.

"Well, I do call that real nice and generous of you," said Mrs. Bunker heartily. "It aint every man would do as much for the poor tenement-folks. I'll tell Jabez—"

She was going, but at the door she turned.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "I guess you'll think I'm just a silly old thing, Mr. Trebbs, but I aint no great hand at business, and that's the truth! It's nice of you to throw off five thousand dollars but—how much would that leave to pay?"

"Oh! don't ask me!" cried Mr. Trebbs. "Don't ask me! I don't want to sell you an ice-mine. I didn't start this—"

"Would it be five thousand dollars?" asked Mrs. Bunker firmly. "Would you take five thousand dollars?"

Mr. Trebbs looked anywhere except in Mrs. Bunker's kindly eyes.

"Yes," he muttered.

Mrs. Bunker was delighted.

"That just shows I wa'n't mistaken in you, Mr. Trebbs," she declared. "I knew you was just the sort of man that would give a full half of what you owned for charity, and you've done it. I'm goin' right up and talk to Jabez about it. Jabez is a shrewd man," she added as an afterthought, "and he aint the sort that buys a pig in a poke. He'll want to see the mine and all. You'd better arrange it so me and him and you can go look at it right soon."

She did not wait for an answer. Mr. Trebbs was so frightened at the rapidity with which he was being forced into a piece of dishonesty he dreaded to undertake, that he could not have spoken had he tried.

MRS. BUNKER climbed the stairs again. As she entered the room, Mr. Bunker spoke to her.

"Ma," he said, "you know this Mr. Trebbs that boards here?"

"I just been talkin' to him," said Mrs. Bunker.

"He owns an ice-mine," said Mr. Bunker.

"I guess I know that as well as you do, Jabez Bunker. Him and me was talkin' about that not a minute ago."

Mr. Bunker chuckled gleefully. During Mrs. Bunker's absence he had hit upon a plan for securing the ownership of the mine for very little money. He was sure he could bunco Mr. Trebbs out of the mine for a very small part of what it was worth.

"Ma," he said, "seems like you always did just the right thing at just the right time. I was just goin' to ask you to go down and sort of start talkin' to Mr. Trebbs about that mine. I'm thinkin' of buyin' that ice-mine, Ma."

"You're a dear old soul, Jabez Bunker!"

"I reckon I aint no worse than other folks," Jabez admitted. "What I had in mind, Ma, was for you to sort of say to Mr. Trebbs how nice it would be if he was to lower down the price of the ice-mine on account of me wantin' to buy it to give to the poor tenement-folks, so they could go over to the mine and get all the free ice they wanted."

"I been sayin' that very thing to him; Jabez."

Mr. Bunker got out of his chair and kissed his wife a jolly smack.

"And he's willin' to cut the price in half, Jabez," she said. "He'll knock off five thousand dollars."

"He will, hey?" beamed Mr. Bunker, and then a sudden thought came to him. "What was you askin' him to do that for, Ma?" he asked. "What interest did you have in an ice-mine?"

"I wanted it, just like you say," she said, "so I could give it to the poor tenement-folks, so they could get free ice."

Mr. Bunker had had no such real intention. He had meant to use that as a means of getting a low price and then, by real bunco-methods, to avoid paying the balance or, at most, more than a

small part of it. He had contemplated forming a stock-company, selling the simple-minded Mr. Trebbs the stock and keeping the bonds for himself as remuneration for selling the stock. By issuing enough bonds at a sufficiently high rate of interest, the ice-mine would be working entirely for Mr. Bunker. There would be no income left to pay dividends on the stock. New Yorkers love such deals. They own billions of dollars' worth of such stock.

But now his thoughts were turned in a different direction. It was seldom Grandma Bunker—bless her heart!—asked for anything or set her heart on anything, and he felt that giving her this ice-mine to give to the poor would be a blessed thing to do, especially if he could get the mine for little or nothing. He slept that night most peacefully and had happy dreams. Not so Mr. Trebbs. That gentleman, finding himself driven, as one might say, by Mrs. Bunker to take up his old calling of bunco-man, spent a miserably sleepless night. Anyone who has been forced by circumstances against his will to bunco anyone will understand how Mr. Trebbs suffered.

THE next day Mr. Bunker tried to find Mr. Trebbs but was unable to do so. He wanted to begin operations at once and had two hundred dollars he wished to give Mr. Trebbs to enable that gentleman to uncover some of the hidden ice in the mine, but Mr. Trebbs did not appear at the boarding-house. He was busy elsewhere.

Mr. Trebbs was, indeed, very busy. Albeit nervous, he went to work briskly to prepare for Mr. Bunker. It was first necessary to locate the ice-mine somewhere in New Jersey, and he spent half a day seeking some abortive real-estate development where lots were cheap and houses few. He had little trouble. There are plenty such, and he was able to purchase for two hundred and fifty dollars a very nice lot, one end of which ran down a hill. He immediately hired five laborers at two dollars a day to begin digging a trench. His next act was to return to New York and hunt up Lefty Lonigan.

Lefty Lonigan (who had a limp in

his left leg) had at one time been a partner of Mr. Trebbs', but like Mr. Trebbs, Mr. Lonigan had retired from the bunco-business. He was now a dealer in postage stamps for collectors, making a specialty of "packets" for beginners—"one thousand, well assorted, for twenty-five cents"—which, in addition to being a legitimate business, had something of the bunco in it. He was as reluctant as Mr. Trebbs had been to reënter the bunco-business, but old friendship prevailed, and he agreed to assist Mr. Trebbs on this occasion only. When Mr. Trebbs gave Mr. Lonigan the deed for the lot in New Jersey, it was seen that the lot stood in Mr. Lonigan's name and not in Mr. Trebbs' name, and Mr. Lonigan willingly gave Mr. Trebbs an option on the lot, dated some months back and to expire on August tenth. It was now August eighth.

Mr. Lonigan immediately took a street-car for Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house, while Mr. Trebbs went back to New Jersey.

In New Jersey Mr. Trebbs went direct to an ice-company and purchased two tons of good, clear artificial ice and left orders to have it delivered at his vacant lot; and there it duly arrived and was dumped. The laborers had completed the trench, and Mr. Trebbs had them bury a few cakes of ice in the trench and cover it over with a few inches of dirt. The remainder of the ice he had planted a few feet deep in the hillside. He was now ready for Mr. Bunker. If Mr. Bunker came, he would find the building-operations stopped on account of the ice the laborers had run into in digging the trench, and he would find the hill, anywhere he dug on Mr. Trebbs' property, solid ice. He did this work rapidly, because Mr. Bunker was liable to appear at any moment. He suspected Mr. Bunker would learn the location of the ice-mine. The reason he

suspected this was that he had sent Mr. Lonigan to Mrs. Wimmer's boarding-house.

MR. LONIGAN, who had every appearance of being a respectable but lame gentleman, arrived at Mrs. Wimmer's at luncheon-time and was greatly disappointed to learn that Mr. Trebbs had not come in. He seemed quite exhausted and asked Mrs. Wimmer if he might have luncheon there and wait for Mr. Trebbs, and of course Mrs. Wimmer granted this. At the table Mr. Lonigan knew Mr. Bunker at a glance, for Mr. Trebbs had described Mr. Bunker, and after luncheon Mr. Bunker made it a point to draw Mr. Lonigan into the parlor and engage him in conversation.

Mr. Lonigan was quite willing to talk. He wanted to see Mr. Trebbs immediately, he said, because Mr. Trebbs had bought a

New Jersey lot from him and hadn't paid for it. Mr. Trebbs had paid only one hundred dollars down on a lot worth two thousand dollars, and the option ran out on the tenth—day after to-morrow. If Mr. Trebbs wasn't going to take up the option and pay the remaining eighteen hundred dollars, Mr. Lonigan wanted to know it, because another party wanted the lot and would pay twenty-five hundred for it.

"I vum!" exclaimed Mr. Bunker, his eyes beaming. "An' I was just sayin' to my wife how nice it would be to own a lot over there in Jersey and build a house on it so as to be out of New York when this hot weather comes. I reckon you wouldn't want to sell that lot to me?"

"I have an offer of twenty-five hundred, if Mr. Trebbs don't live up to his option," said Mr. Lonigan.

"I might go so far as to pay three thousand," said Mr. Bunker. "Me and Ma likes New Jersey."

ZANE GREY'S GREAT NOVEL

"THE ROARING U.-P. TRAIL," the best novel Zane Grey ever wrote, will commence publication in our next issue. It is based on the exciting events of the building of the Union Pacific Railroad—the first railway across the plains; and it's a real Zane Grey story. We can't say more than that—and you won't need to be told anything more. You've a real treat coming.

"Well, in that case, of course!" said Mr. Lonigan. "If that's how you feel, I'm not going to wait for Mr. Trebbs. I'd a lot better let his option fall in."

Mr. Bunker, to secure an option, gave Mr. Lonigan the two hundred dollars he had meant to give to Mr. Trebbs. He inquired closely regarding the location of the lot, and the next day saw him there. He used the greatest precautions. The place was utterly deserted, but he carried a spade and a few minutes were enough to assure him that there was ice. He chuckled to himself. No man was ever happier than Mr. Bunker. If Mr. Trebbs did not take up the option, the ice-mine was Mr. Bunker's; and if Mr. Trebbs did take up the option, Mr. Bunker would work the stock-and-bond game and get the ice-mine, anyway.

TREBBS did not appear at the boarding-house that night, and not until nearly noon the next day. He was apparently in a condition of extreme nervousness. He had the air of a man who has been trying in every way to raise money, but without success. As evening approached, he became more and more distraught. After dinner he spoke to Mr. Bunker.

"I've been expecting a man to come," he said. "I wrote to a man I thought would help me. He is a man I ought to be able to borrow a few thousand dollars from, but he hasn't come. I've got to go out. I've got to find him."

Mr. Trebbs did not come back. He never came back.

The next morning Mr. Bunker went to Mr. Lonigan's office with three thousand good dollars and bought the

New Jersey lot. Mr. Lonigan, in selling it, said he really thought Mr. Bunker was paying more than it was worth, but he supposed Mr. Bunker liked the view, or something. It was none of his business, anyway. Fifteen minutes after Mr. Bunker left the office, Mr. Lonigan had packed his stock of used postage-stamps and had disappeared forever.

"**MA**," said Mr. Bunker a week later when, after a visit to New Jersey, they were returning to New York, "I aint goin' to scold you a bit. It aint your fault there wasn't nothin' on that lot to-day but a lot of muddy dirt. Ice will melt, Ma, and you or me can't keep it from meltin'."

"No, Jabez," she said meekly.

"But I've been bunked, Ma."

"Yes, Jabez," she said meekly.

It was on their return to the boarding-house that Mr. Bunker found a contrite letter from Mr. Trebbs, begging his pardon and explaining that Mr. Trebbs had not wanted to bunco Mr. Bunker and that Mr. Trebbs had never been a first-class bunco-man and that Mr. Trebbs had not done any bunco-work for twenty years. The letter ended: "*Your wife put me up to it.*"

Mr. Bunker read the letter and looked at dear old Mrs. Bunker over the tops of his gold-rimmed spectacles. He smiled quizzically and then walked to her and kissed her.

"Ma," he said, "I've sort of enjoyed bunkin' these New Yorkers; it comes so easy; but when you start in bunkin' your old husband, I reckon it's time we went back to Oroduna, Iowa. New York aint no place for you, Ma!"

This is the last of *Jabez Bunker*—for a time at least. Thanks to the good gods of humor, however, it is by no means the last of Ellis Parker Butler. He has written several more excellent stories for *THE BLUE BOOK*, and you may count on reading one of the best of these next month.



The WISH FAIRY'S WORK

By
Albert Payson Terhune

"GOD save you from the Werewolf," runs the Norse maxim, "and from your heart's desire!"

We used to spend many profitless nursery hours—after reading such popular juvenile classics as "The Wishing Gate" and "The Three Wishes" and so on—in planning just exactly what wonderful things we would demand should the Wish-Fairy suddenly appear before us with an elfin order-blank.

We would have welcomed the Wish-Fairy with greedily open arms in those ignorant young days. And we would have fled screeching to Nurse, had the "Jack-in-the-Beanstalk" Giant or the *Gingerbread Witch* or *Red Riding-Hood's* loquacious *Wolf* loomed up at our elbows.

Yet, from the dreary wisdom and experience of grown-up years, most of us have gleaned sense enough to know that the *Wish-Fairy* would have been a far deadlier visitant than the entire horrendous trio. The *Wolf*, the *Giant*, the *Gingerbread Witch* could do no more than kill us, whereas the *Wish-Fairy's* wand could not only do that but open the gates of hell besides, and waft us down through them.

Wherefore we all agree, in riper age,

that the three bugaboos combined are infinitely less to be dreaded than the *Wish-Fairy*. And in our calm adult intelligence we keep on shying nervously away from bogies—and yearning unspeakably, in secret, to meet the *Wish-Fairy* face to face.

And this leads up, right prosily, to the tale of two people who actually met this damnable fairy and to whom she granted their hearts' desire.

JEAN STACEY was perhaps the very best and hardest and most intelligent worker in the Hegan Store. She earned fully fifty dollars a week—of which she received eight and a half—the remaining forty-one-fifty going toward offsetting the store's heavy overhead charges.

She was quick; she was obliging; she was tireless. She had a memory that embraced the price, the quality, the virtues, of practically every article on the floor whose "Emergency" she was.

There was no laziness, no nonsense, about Jean Stacey. The word *reliability* had never blossomed into its full meaning until she began her career at Hegan's.

She was so good, so efficient, that the floorwalker never glanced in her direction. And following the floorwalker's example, no other man—inside the store or out—had ever looked twice at her.

The Wish Fairy's Work

This was Jean's life-tragedy.

Yet, being wise, she did not blame men for their neglect. Instead, she looked in the flawed mirror of her neat little bedroom for the thousandth time, and for the millionth time took accurate and dispassionate stock of what she saw there. She inventoried herself with the merciless calmness she would have lavished on a new bill of goods at Hegan's. And this is what she deduced:

Height, five feet, four; weight, one hundred and sixteen; chest, flat; waist, noncommittal; hands and feet, capable rather than shapely; hair, no particular color; eyes, ditto; features, serviceable; expression, willing.

For the rest, her voice was as colorless as her lashes and brows. Of charm and magnetism and allure she was virgin. She had not even the repose, the quiet restfulness, that draws some men to some women as tired feet are drawn to shabby slippers.

In short, Jean was one hundred per cent business efficiency, and apparently she was not one per cent sex. Wherefore men passed her by—not through design, but because they did not see her.

This was Jean's life-tragedy, as I think I said once before, and as I may have to say at least once again.

Under the flat, efficient chest blazed and pulsed a heart as attuned to mad romance as is a Cremona to the maestro's bow. She was wildly, hopelessly, gloriously in love—with love—which, by the way, is absolutely normal. She had no visible swain whereon to lavish her wealth of romantic devotion, and so the impulse turned inward. Jean set up an altar in her own heart—a glowingly sacred shrine to the fire-god Romance.

For nine hours a day (and for eleven hours a day in rush seasons) at Hegan's Store, she was a splendidly flawless and bloodless machine, working with dull competence. For the day's remaining hours she was *Juliet*, *Rosalind*, *Haidée*, Rupert Hughes' *Persis*—in short, any love-shaken heroine you will.

In the sanctity of her tiny bedroom, she read every love-story, classical or

By Albert Payson Terhune

trashical, she could lay hands on. She devoured every burning love-poem she could find—from Swinburne's blackly magical "Before the Dawn" to the erotic-neurotic-tommyrotic "fillerverses" in the *Sloppy Stories Magazine*.

These things became a part of her, even as her dream-life had become a part of her. She thrilled at Romance's touch in the typed page as other love-lorn maids thrill at the touch of human lover.

She did not merely read: she visualized; she herself was the heroine of each love-story she absorbed. To her, a burning-eyed gallant in collar-advertisement garb was breathing the rhythmic measures of the poems she scanned.

Was it odd that Jean had never fallen in love—even in secret—with any actual man? I think not. Her whole workaday life was fringed with men, it is true. But they had no eyes for her. She saw only the sharp, wage-earning side of their natures. None of them spoke to her, save curtly and on business.

With which of them could she even have imagined herself in love? Which of those grubby toilers could have stood a moment's comparison with the dark-eyed, slender, nattily clad hero of her imagination, who peeped out at her from the pages of every love-story, and whose deeply vibrant voice whispered the cadences of inspired poetry in her ears as her eyes accompanied his wondrous voice in the printed stanzas?

Her dream-lover was wont to accost her in verses that began: "*To hunt sweet love and lose him*" and in such equally fervent rhymes as "*Wont You Be My Ownest Owney Own?*"

She listened coyly to this invisible wooer's pleas. She flirted outrageously with other bodiless suitors to make him jealous. She quarreled with him. She made up with him, in exquisitely tender reconciliation scenes. She fled with him, in a high-powered French car, while her irate multimillionaire father pursued in an inferior machine.

She lived a stormily rapturous love-life with this magnificent adorer. And

then, every once in a while, she would realize it was all a bit of driveling and futile child-play—that she had no lover, that she could never hope to have a lover. And from sheer aloneness she would weep until her thin-lashed eyes were all red and puffy and her snub nose shone like a polished apple.

In all her hollow, overbusy life, Jean had seen but one man who could bear comparison with her dream-lover. That one exception was Royce Hegan, owner of the Hegan Store. Hegan was slender, dark-eyed, intensely handsome; and he dressed like a fashion-plate.

In fact, though she scarce knew it, Jean had drawn her dream-lover's outward aspect from Royce Hegan's. That was two years ago, the first time she had seen the owner stroll along the thronged aisles of her floor. She did not make Hegan her ideal; she merely clothed her ideal with Hegan's outward personality, and thought no more about the original himself.

AND so dragged on Jean Stacey's oddly dual life. Half the time she was a stonily unemotional worker. Half the time she was a blazingly emotional dreamer. And her dream-life grew to be her real life, the life that held her only ambition.

This ambition was that her friends one day couple her name with some admirer's, and that such a man as her dream-lover might just once clasp her in his arms.

(Wont you please read the last sentence, once more, if it is not too much trouble—and bear it in mind?)

Such an ambition was as laughably unreachable as though Jean had yearned to be Empress of China. Yet it *was* her ambition. It was her one wish.

And the *Wish-Fairy*, lurking around the corner, heard the wish and jotted it down, indorsing it, "Granted!" And this makes it rather sad that Jean Stacey had not wished, instead, for a million dollars or for a prettier nose or for something else really worth while. For one does not catch the *Wish-Fairy* in so yielding a mood every day in the year.

ROYCE HEGAN, owner of the Hegan Store, did not know Jean by sight. But he knew many another woman. In fact, he was the luckless type of man whom women stubbornly refuse to ignore.

And out of the many, he fell in love with one—or fancied he fell in love, which amounts to precisely the same thing. He met her ten years after his marriage, at that rickety period of wedded life when the first flush of youth and lovely ardor has ebbed, and where middle-aged complacency and sweetly steadfast comradeship have not yet taken charge to guide the life-partners safe to the end of the road.

It is a perilous bit of neutral ground, that tenth-year stretch—quite as perilous as in Revolutionary days André found the stretch of neutral territory between Peekskill and New York, as perilous as Belgium's neutral realm between Germany and France. Happy, thrice happy, the couple who pass through it without scath. The Hegan were not that couple.

Royce was forty, and he looked thirty. His wife was under forty and looked forty-five. She discovered this bitter fact even before her husband did. And it made her jealous—savagely jealous.

She watched her youthful-looking husband right narrowly. And suspicion stewed and festered in her sour heart. At last she was rewarded—with the Dead Sea Fruit reward of the jealous who succeed in verifying their suspicions.

The Other Woman wrote Royce a letter. It was a criminally foolish letter—just criminally foolish, mind you: not foolishly criminal. Affairs had not gone as far as that; love-piracy was still in the epistolary stage. The letter was the sort a woman writes late at night, and tears up next morning. But the Other Woman rashly mailed it the night it was written.

It reached the Hegan house on the first morning mail. Royce was out of town. His wife stared miserably at the envelope's racy feminine handwriting—for five whole minutes. She spent three minutes more in prodding and pinching the thick oblong of paper, and

another two minutes in holding it to the light.

After that, in an access of daring, she steamed open the envelope and drew out the letter—not, necessarily, because she was that kind of woman, but because she was drunk with jealousy. She read the letter. And drunkenness merged into violent mania.

As a child bites on a sore tooth, so Mrs. Hegan read and reread and reread the idiotic screed. And at the end of each reading she puzzled over the signature.

The Other Woman had signed her letter with a queer little hieroglyph which she and Royce had invented for just that purpose—hieroglyph that could not be deciphered, because it meant nothing—except to those two.

This balk served only to feed Mrs. Hegan's flaming intent to identify the Other Woman. She spent the bulk of the day in planning ways and means to find who the creature was, and in framing hot vengeance for her.

THEN, late in the afternoon, Royce came home from his out-of-town business trip. There was a horrible scene—one of those scenes that begin as terribly as can be, and keep right on getting worse and worse until they destroy themselves by their own appalling vehemence—the nauseatingly degrading type of scene that makes one wonder if it were really worth mankind's while to struggle up from the beasts.

Mrs. Hegan raged and snarled and wept—but ever she *talked*. When she was not berating, she was threatening. When she was doing neither, she was heaping gutter-names on the Other Woman.

Royce listened—outwardly dead white and very stiff; inwardly quaking with fright, the helpless fright that throttles a man when a woman-secret is menaced.

He said almost nothing. He neither evaded nor explained nor denied. That was not his way. He just stood there and took the brunt of the charge.

So long as Mrs. Hegan contented herself with abusing him, he did not care to answer. When she took to vilifying the Other Woman, he had the

sense to keep his raging retorts to himself. It was only when his wife vowed to learn the Other Woman's name—to denounce her, to shame her forever, to pillory her to the hissing of the multitude and to nail her reputation's carcass on society's barn-door—it was only then that Royce's terror threatened to break bounds.

For love of him—so ran his tumult of thought—a good woman was to be branded with the Scarlet Letter. He knew his wife's fierce tenacity of idea. He knew she would spend the whole future, if need be, to find out her rival and disgrace her.

With a longing that was almost a prayer, he wished for some way to protect the Other Woman's name.

It was his one wish.

And the *Wish-Fairy* (perhaps attracted to the Hegan house by the noise of battle) heard and recorded his wish.

Yes, in a moment of rare and murderous generosity, the *Wish-Fairy* ordained that both Royce Hegan and Jean Stacey should have their supreme desires granted them within the next eighteen hours.

THE October evening was cold and thunderstormy. There was little to tempt even the most rabid pleasure-seeker to take advantage of the last night of the season on which the Beach Steamboat Line was to run its tublike flotilla between city and pier.

The big white excursion-boat was all but empty as Jean came aboard at its city dock. The girl was glad for this. The crowds always jostled her, without paying her the slightest attention. The sight of their open love-making redoubled her own drear loneliness. She liked to get a place all to herself on the crescent-shaped stern-bench, and peer backward at the foam of the churned wake.

To-night there was no one to share this bench with her, no one to smile derision if she should kneel awkwardly on the bench, as she liked to, and lean far over the rail to watch the swirl of pallid witch-fire among the propeller's eddies.

In fact, as she boarded the boat, there was not a soul but herself on the big

rear deck. One or two amorous couples were cuddled close together in the shadows further forward, to either side of the cabin, and a few sulkily bored folk lounged in the garish cabin itself. But the rear deck seemed to interest nobody but Jean, and so she had it all to herself.

There was always something hypnotic, to the girl, in the dance and play of the foamy wake on a black night. It gave her visions. It was, to her, the most enthralling part of a trip to the beach. For the sake of it, as much as for the later stroll across the darkling sands with her dream-lover, she made such evening voyages every week or so, during the season.

Besides, the next day it was nice to mention casually to the other girls that she had had a perfectly lovely evening at the beach—in the tiny hope that some of them might think she had been escorted thither: which not one of them thought.

HOME being a horror, Royce Hegan had fled forth into the streets. He wanted to be somewhere, anywhere, alone—somewhere away from everyone—to hammer his bemused brain back into a semblance of coherence, to think out some sane plan of defense, of protection to the woman whom his love had imperiled.

As he walked aimlessly onward, blundering against home-going folk and causing taxi-drivers to swear at his blind progress across streets, there came upon him an animal instinct—a craving for the lonely places where undisturbed he and his troubled soul might meet the situation face to face and seek to solve it. Into his sick mind came visions of lonely night sands, where the soft roar of the sea might soothe his shock-shattered nerves. He boarded the beach steamer, a bare half-minute before the gangplank was hauled in, and he looked for a corner where he might avoid the crowds. But there were no crowds to avoid. There were but a handful of passengers. The dim-lighted rear deck, oddly enough, was tenantless, except for a thin woman in black who crouched sideways on the crescent-shaped bench, peering over the rear rail.

Royce picked up a campstool from a heap stacked against the cabin wall and seated himself next to the port rail some fifty feet from the girl. She had not so much as looked up as he came on deck.

The boat grunted and ground its way out into the bay. The sky above was pitch black, except when a blink of lightning from the western horizon paled its darkness. The air was deathly still, save for an almost endless mutter of thunder that was far away but steadily growing nearer. It was the night of nights to watch the phosphorus-dance of the wake. It was the night of nights to drive an unhappy man's perplexedly miserable thoughts backward upon himself.

Out into the pitchy bay, under the pitchy sky, rolled the white tub, the shore lights growing fainter until they hung like a badly strung necklace of brilliants against a background of velvet murk—the far-off beach lights barely visible to the eastward.

Royce had wanted to get away from everyone, from everything; yet now that he was practically alone, between sea and sky, his own musings buzzed about him and stung him like a swarm of hornets. It was himself he wanted to get away from—not his fellow-men; he realized that now.

The louder clatter of thunder, the increasing vividness of the lightning, the electrical breathlessness of the oncoming storm—all served to goad his tortured nerves to frenzy. At last he could bear the strain no longer. He must speak to some one. Something must break the magnetic current that was torturing him.

His wandering eye fell on the woman who shared the rear deck with him. Through the gloom he could barely make out the lines of her body. She seemed to be kneeling on the bench and leaning over the rail. Dully, Royce wondered if she were trying to muster courage to jump overboard. At any rate, it was not safe to lean so far over the rail. Her possible danger would give him an excuse to speak to her. She would probably snub him. If she did, he could go forward and hunt up some deck-hand to talk to.

JEAN was staring in stupid fixity at the dancing shreds and whirlpools in the snowy wake. Never had she seen the witch-fire so brilliant as to-night. Always it hypnotized her. Now it held not only her eyes but also her tired brain, under its queerly gyrating spell. Imagination was sweeping her onward toward her dream-lover, toward the dark-eyed, slender, exquisitely clad wooer who awaited her on the sands, who—

Vaguely she became aware that a man stood behind her—that a man's voice was speaking to her. Still dazed and half-mesmerized, she turned at the sound of the voice. A flare of lightning showed her dream-lover—in the flesh or in the spirit—bending over her. She was not surprised. She knew now that she had always been certain he would some time come to her. She looked up at him in stolid recognition.

"I said, 'It's dangerous to lean so far over the rail,'" repeated Hegan gently, adding: "Are you in trouble? Can I help you?"

"I—I am so glad you came—at last," she mumbled dizzily. "I knew you'd come, some day."

Royce barely caught the sleep-talk words. He guessed from them that this plain-visaged woman, with the blank stare, had arranged to meet a man friend on board, and that she mistook him for her swain.

The idea mildly amused Royce. His lips parted to explain her blunder. But she continued, in the same dazed undertone:

"But I—I always used to s'pose you'd say to me, first, something like: 'Is this the face that launched a thousand ships and—' Oh, excuse me!" she broke off, horrified, sanity rushing back upon her. "I—I mistook you for someb'dy else."

She was herself again now—her common-sense self, who realized that

eyes and brain had fooled her, and that this was not the blissful, impossible dream-meeting she had imagined.

Her sallow face went brick red, there in the merciful darkness. And she edged a little away from Hegan, shuffling gawkily along the bench like a parrot on its perch.

"May I stop here a few minutes and talk with you?" blurted Royce impulsively; and he added, before he realized what he was saying: "I am very unhappy."

For the first time in all her twenty-six empty years a man had troubled to

speak to Jean, except on business of some sort. More—a man had just sought her out—had very evidently been attracted to her—had even pleaded to linger at her side.

She all but touched the hem of Romance's robe. The portals of Paradise seemed about to swing open for her. And at that moment, through no volition of her, she heard her own primly dry voice replying:

"The gen'lem'n I'm keepin' steady company with don't like me to talk to strange gen'lem'n. Will you please go 'way and leave me be? If you don't I'll complain to—"

"I beg your pardon," put in Royce, altogether himself again. "I'm sorry if I offended you."

He raised his hat, turned and made off toward his own corner of the deck.

"Pie-faced little fool!" he growled angrily to himself. "Served me right for blabbing to her like a kindergarten kid. I'm—"

He slouched down into his camp-chair at this point in his wrathful musings and glowered through the darkness toward the cause of his ill temper. Again the lightning-flare showed her to him.

She was kneeling on the bench and leaning farther than ever over the rail. He could not know her eyes were thick

"THE ROARING U. P. TRAIL"

ZANE GREY has written his best novel for THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, and we will begin its publication next month. "The Roaring U. P. Trail" follows the building of the Union Pacific Railroad across the great West; and it's a real roaring Zane Grey novel—just about the most thrilling story you ever read.

The Wish Fairy's Work

with tears and that her heart was pounding and that she was fighting to keep herself from running over to where he sat.

A roar of thunder shook the wallowing boat, and a second later came a white blaze of lightning. By the flash, Hegan saw the girl make a sudden move to turn about. She overbalanced. Screeching, she clawed in futile frenzy at the rail.

As darkness shut down, Royce Hegan sprang across the deck toward her. As he leaped forward, he shouted at the top of his lungs. A thunderclap blurred his shout into nothingness, and the flash that accompanied it showed him a splash of black, spinning around and around in the boat's phosphorescent wake.

With another thunder-drowned yell for help Royce vaulted overboard—instinctively kicking at the rail, as he went, to throw his body out beyond the slash of the propeller-blades.

Into the ice-chill water plunged Hegan, feet downward. To the surface he bobbed, in the white smother of the wake, not ten yards from the shrieking girl.

Jean's sleazy skirt had ballooned, and for the moment it was bearing her up. Through her hell of fright, the incessant lightning-flare showed her a man's face, dripping and agile, that moved toward her through the eddying foam—the face of her dream-lover. He had come to her rescue, just as he always did—in books.

With a screech that held as much joy as terror, Jean Stacy flung both her lean arms about Hegan's neck, and clutched him in a grip that carried the threat of death.

"Let go!" he gurgled, writhing in a vain struggle to unlock the grasp from his throat. "Let me go—and lie still. It's the only way I can—hold you up till help comes!"

His command went unheard in the roar and splashing above and about them. He tried to shout. A gush of sea-water filled his mouth. The thin arms were welded like chains around his neck. The girl's lanky body im-

By Albert Payson Terhune

peded the motion of his own arms. His kicking legs were enmeshed in the folds of the wet skirt.

Mad with the nightmare sensation of helplessness, Royce lost his head and sought to grapple with the girl he had just risked his life to save. And a wave washed over them.

IT was after sunrise that a coast-guard found the man and woman lying on the shining sands, a mile beyond the beach pier. Their close-interwoven arms gave the bodies a right loving pose—which not even the stark hate on the two swollen faces could offset.

The local coroner found in Royce's inner coat-pocket the usual assortment of letters. The purse in Jean's stocking contained her store time-card.

Presently a cohort of reporters bore down upon the Hegan house, clamoring feverishly for news. They got it.

Mrs. Hegan was hysterical. She was of the breed whom hysteria and grief render voluble. Every reporter and exporter knows the type and has at some time battened upon it for his paper's benefit. Mrs. Hegan, against the orders of her doctor and the sobbing pleas of her family, insisted on seeing the newspaper men, one and all, and on telling everything she thought she knew.

Just one hour later the earliest and shrillest of the afternoon newspapers smeared across its front page these conservative headlines:

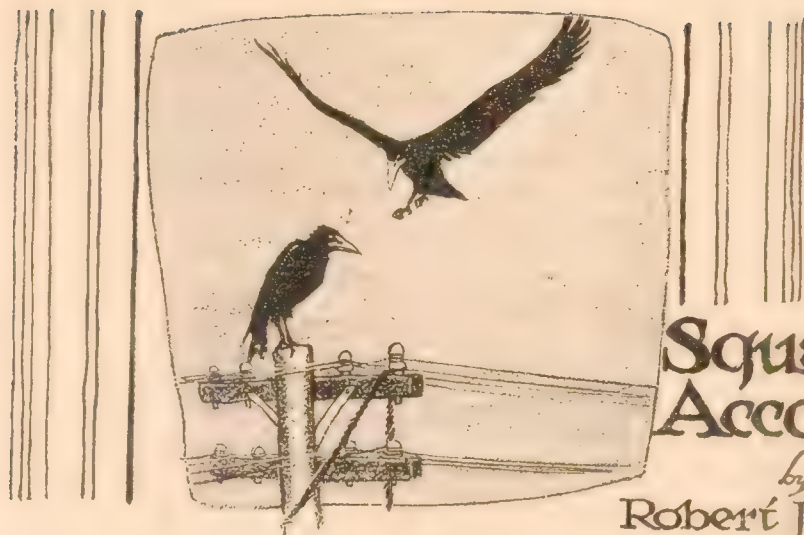
PERISH IN DEATH PACT RICH MERCHANT DROWNS WITH BEAUTIFUL EMPLOYEE

Royce Hegan and Jean Stacey
Drown in Each Other's Arms.
Their Secret Discovered
By Lover's Wife.

Do you remember Jean's "One Wish?"

Do you remember Royce's?

Did ever two other people achieve their heart's desire at so trivial a price?



Squared Accounts

by
Robert J. Casey

IN the old days and in the stirring times which trod closely upon the heels of the old days it was no crime to shoot a soldier in Dakota City. It was a misdemeanor, perhaps,—a failing to be classed with going to church on Sunday and losing at faro on weekdays,—but it was certainly not a felony.

Soldiers were not like the rest of men. They were a race apart, a faction. And where there are factions, there must be factionalism.

As individuals, Dakota City was ready to admit, soldiers were not so greatly different from civilians. There was no animus in the feud. Each of the Dakota citizens whose pocket or shirt-front bulged with a blue-barreled revolver would have differed with everyone else in town if suddenly pinned down to an explanation for the need of a gun at all. Similarly no two would have settled upon the same reason for fighting with the cavalymen from Fort Meade. But the overshadowing fact remained: for a soldier to venture alone into Main Street after dark was foolishness if not suicide.

The Government took the situation philosophically. The spread of the feud made it impossible for the civil authorities to gather evidence had they cared to—and they didn't. So new mounds appeared now and then in the post cemetery, and likewise, if the truth be

told, in the burying-ground adjoining Dakota City.

So when Captain John Reno and Lieutenant Charles Carter suddenly rode onto a bleaching skeleton in the brakes near Bear Butte, they dismounted merely to kick the bones about in the hope that the long-departed gentleman might have had a tangible dollar or two in his now decayed pocket.

They found no dollar,—no coins of any sort, unless a copper pocket-piece corroded by the alkaline action of the soil might be so classified,—but they did find brass buttons, a shred or two of regulation blue uniform, and a cheap aluminum matchbox on which the initials *H. T. J.* had been crudely engraved with a jackknife.

The skeleton was lying face down in the protection of a rock. There was a bullet-hole through the back of the skull.

"Harry Jennings," ejaculated the Captain as he turned the matchbox over and over in his hand. "I remember him well. . . . Good boy—no enemies or anything like that. Was always talking about a mine that was going to make him rich. . . . We thought he'd deserted when he went away."

Lieutenant Carter said nothing. He was new to the post, the Black Hills country and the service. When he spoke, which was not often, he betrayed a Massachusetts origin. Captain

Reno scarcely glanced at him to see whether the gruesome find had impressed him or not.

His lack of interest was a thing to be taken for granted just as one presupposes the rising of the sun or the flowing of water downhill. "Carter was from the East, and it was the Captain's private opinion that no good could come out of Massachusetts.

All of this made Reno's surprise the greater when he looked up from the matchbox and discovered his Lieutenant on his knees among the whitened bones, picking over with nervous fingers the shreds that had once been clothing.

"What's got into you," the senior officer demanded.

Carter gazed at him as though suddenly awakened from a nightmare.

"That man was my brother, Captain," he explained quietly. "His real name was Harry Jennings Carter. I came out here looking for him, and I expected to find him just like this. I know who killed him, and I give you fair warning that I intend to mix into the mess."

Captain Reno stared at him incredulously—then clasped his hand.

"When we get back to the post, I suppose I'll have to give you a lecture on conduct becoming an officer and a gentleman," he said, "Unofficially, however, I'd be impelled to say go to it and good luck."

LIEUTENANT CARTER had reason to be thankful that he was an officer. As a private he might have been the object of special attention from the peevish drill-sergeants with concomitant woe to all concerned. At a later period in the history of the American army, he would have been known as a "bolo boy"—i. e., one whose physical welfare is better protected with a bolo than with a rifle. Inasmuch as no such term was then in circulation, the news of his difficulties on the target-range brought him no humiliation other than the eloquent smiles of his superiors. Officers have no great need for proficiency in marksmanship, and so the Lieutenant's gunnery was a matter of small moment to the post.

Captain Reno watched him carefully

as several officers lay behind the sand-bags on the rifle-range the day after their ride into the hills.

Carter, shooting from the two-hundred-yard line, loaded, set his windage and elevation, and aimed with deadly deliberation. The range, laid out where the mountain-slopes merged with the prairie land, was perfectly lighted by a morning sun and protected from winds by the dark foothills that rose to the westward. Under such conditions,—and for that matter under any other conditions,—according to the Captain's creed, it seemed impossible that a man could help but shoot well. He gasped when, a few seconds after Carter had fired, the red flag flashed before the target. It was a miss—a clean miss at two hundred yards!

"Remarkable shootin'," observed the Captain dryly. "That's the first time I ever saw anything like it."

Carter ignored the comment, pumped out a smoking shell and then fired again.

The target sank and rose, and once more came the flash of the red flag. Captain Reno snorted his disgust.

On the bull's-eye next to that at which Carter was firing, a white disk covered the black. A lieutenant behind a bag a few feet distant from Carter exultantly credited himself with five points in his green score-book. The bull's-eye was all the more important to him because of the contrast with the marksmanship of his neighbor.

"Look what you're doing," advised Reno as Carter aimed for the third shot. "Look at your windage."

The Lieutenant smiled and handed over the rifle. The Captain returned it without comment. The only possible excuse for Carter's wretched performance was absent. Windage and elevation were both given correct allowance in the adjustment of the sights.

As Reno pondered, the Lieutenant fired once more—and found the target. It was just barely a hit. The black disk which arose from the markers' pit to designate it lingered briefly at the lower right corner. The fourth shot was a miss—the fifth a hit in the upper left corner.

Reno looked at Carter in deep pity.

As the Lieutenant arose and stepped back to make way for another gunner, the Captain was close to his side.

"There's one honest piece of advice I'd like to give you, boy," he said earnestly. "In these parts, the man who goes around nursing a grouch has to be prepared to take care of himself. If you're setting out to get the fellows who shot your brother, you need some training in 'getting.' If you'll just delay the expeditions awhile,—say until next month,—I think I can teach you which end of a rifle the smoke comes out of."

Carter grinned and shook his head.

"I know I'm not much of a marksman, Captain," he admitted. "That's what I came out here for—to practice. But I guess I can get along all right. I can split an inch plank with my fist."

Reno stared at him dubiously.

"What the devil use are your fists when somebody's shootin' at you with a gun?" he demanded. "After you've been buttonhole-stitched about twice, your fists quit working. . . . Thence by gun-caisson to the post cemetery."

"But think of the gun-man who gets walloped in the ear with a fist like that," returned Carter, unabashed. "Do you think he's going to shoot anybody after his skull caves in on top of his few brains?"

"You talk just the way a man from Massachusetts would be expected to talk," observed Reno. "I'm only hoping you don't get croaked before one of these quiet townspeople hands you your diploma."

Carter smiled confidently, and Captain Reno cursed him with fine flow of language.

But the doubts for the Lieutenant's future were not confined to the Captain. Before the week was out, the entire post knew the situation and shook its collective head.

The outcome of a feud between a man who could not hit the broad side of a white barn at high noon from a stand forty paces distant, and men whose continuing existence in Dakotah City testified to their marksmanship, could be only one thing. The director of the regimental band got out his books and began looking for a suitable funeral-march.

DESPITE numerous warnings that a trip to Dakotah City, for a man of his artillery attainments, was the precursor of a short life and a long funeral, Lieutenant Carter rode down from the post one evening to give his inhospitable neighbors a friendly call.

He slipped out of the reservation by riding over the hills to the north, thus eluding Captain Reno, his self-appointed guardian, but making necessary a wide detour which brought him into town long after the trumpeter had sounded taps on the Fort Meade parade-ground.

He picketed his horse in a draw that was well outside the city limits and far enough from the road to avoid the attention of industrious citizens who might soon be passing that way. Then he proceeded cautiously toward the lights that marked the whereabouts of the Silver Heels saloon and dance-hall.

The evening's festivities were just beginning at the Silver Heels establishment. Women of a sort and men of a species were contributing to the general gayety with bursts of song and sallies of alcoholic wit indicative of the restlessness that would soon bring about a fight, when Carter stepped into the long, odorous, smoke-filled room. He carried himself with a careless swing and beamed with a whole-souled smile upon the few who noticed him. But he was scratching his left shoulder with his right hand under the cover of his jacket, and there was a bulge just beneath it which might have been caused by a cast over a broken rib, but which very likely wasn't.

Had the Dakotah citizens been given to mental exercise, they might have wondered at the appearance of an officer in the Silver Heels. Officers had been seen there only at the head of the occasional platoon of cavalry which rescued the wounded and bore off the dead after a battle. However, the citizenry was not particular. Officers were just as welcome as privates—no more, no less.

A ministerial person passed flagons of varnish-remover over the bar with an air of great melancholy. Cow-men, miners and whatnots emptied the

glasses jovially, increasingly boisterous as each succeeding quaff stripped off large areas of mucous membrane on its downward passage.

Carter's eyes traveled across the room, beyond the reeling dancers and the battered tables. His grin flickered for an instant and then flamed again. Scarcely visible through the dense crowd about the board at which he sat, "General" Jim Gordon dealt faro with nimble fingers and a red vest.

As quietly as possible, Carter edged along the wall toward the scene of Mr. Gordon's endeavors. No one noticed him. It was the custom of the place that a soldier should receive attention only in combat, and the hour for battle had not yet arrived.

Carter stopped in the shadow of a pot-bellied stove to reconnoiter. There was a swinging window just behind him, and beyond it he glimpsed a full moon in a clear sky. He was glad of the window. The moon he would just as soon have done without. However, there was no helping conditions, and so he drew up a chair and sat watching the dancers, still clasping his left arm affectionately and waiting.

He had not long to wait.

There was a raucous laugh in the direction of the bar, closely followed by a pistol-shot. A light went out.

Carter was on his feet instantly, hugging the stove as closely as the heat would permit. He saw Gordon hastily scoop the money from the faro-bank into a canvas sack and reach for his coat.

There was a second shot, and another of the swinging lamps gave up the ghost. The third lamp, pendant at the far end of the hall, followed amid a fusillade and a chorus of shrieks.

Carter's last vision was of Gordon, plunging toward him. His right hand left his jacket and brought with it a service revolver. He raised it expectantly; then he evidently resolved to play safe and returned it to the holster beneath his armpit. He clutched the iron poker that hung behind the stove and backed quickly toward the wall.

A second later, as he had foreseen, Gordon flashed by him in the moonlight, headed for the window. He

never reached it. The Lieutenant had bent the soft iron bar over the faro-dealer's skull, seized his coat, and vanished with a headlong dive over the sill.

He was on his way back to the fort before the gun-practice of the Silver Heels' evening entertainment was well begun.

DAKOTA CITY, never a dull town, had more than its usual allotment of conversational topics during the days that followed.

When the ministerial personage had stuck his head above his bar in the Silver Heels at the close of the bombardment, had provided new lamps and had rearranged the smashed furniture, he discovered that the chief victim of the battle was "General" Jim Gordon, who lay in an almost dying condition under the window near the pot-bellied stove.

The combatants, sober and out of ammunition, came forth from their improvised barricades and helped the bartender carry the damaged faro-dealer out into the open air.

The women of the place, accustomed as they were to such scenes, looked on in amazement and began an excited whispering. Gordon, so local gossip had it, was the best pistol-shot in the Black Hills, and the quickest on the draw. Yet here he lay, his gun untouched in its place of concealment under his belt, his face bruised and bloody, an ugly crease in his scalp. When the chief of the Silver Heels first discovered him, the funds of the faro-bank were clutched in his left hand. They disappeared later in the evening, but not soon enough to establish a robbery-motive for the assault.

A second mystery centered in the disappearance of the soldier of whom a few of the Silver Heels patronage hazily remembered. According to precedent he, and not the nimble-fingered Gordon, should have been occupying a place on the improvised stretcher. Had it not been so obviously impossible, a few would have suggested that the soldier might have been able to explain the welt on the faro-dealer's head. But that of course was preposterous.

Gordon was taken to his cot in the Double Eagle Hotel and left in charge of a half-sober physician who dared him to get well.

He regained consciousness a day later and inquired after his coat. It was brought to him. An attaché of the Silver Heels had found it on the ground just outside the window through which Gordon had tried to make his exit. With the coat was delivered a knife bearing the initials *T. T. J.* and a letter addressed to the Makashaw Mining and Milling Company, Denver.

Gordon looked at the knife and letter queerly but said nothing. Later, when the doctor had hied himself out after another drink, he managed to tear open the envelope. He read the enclosure despite the terrible aching of his head and the jumping spots before his eyes. After the first line, nothing short of blindness could have halted him.

THE next day the affair acquired new importance with the circulation of a rumor that Gordon was looking for a place to put a new notch in his gun and that his recovery would be the signal for somebody's quick departure from this life.

The physician, loquacious in his cups, let a word fall here and there during a visit to the Silver Heels, and it became common knowledge that Thomas Jenkins, sour-dough and former partner of the peevish Gordon, was the object of the latter's solicitude.

It was said on the same authority that Gordon and Jenkins were the joint possessors of the Slim Kitty mine, a producer in the hills near town, and that Jenkins had undertaken to freeze out the Dakotah City faro-dealer by inviting the Makashaw interests to cross-file on the claim after he had neglected the assessment-work prescribed by the Government. Evidence to this effect, it was said, had been found near Gordon's coat the morning after the *mêlée* in the Silver Heels.

Lieutenant Carter rode into town the first day Gordon was able to be about. They met near the Double Eagle Hotel, and Dakotah City received a new thrill. Carter beamed on the battered faro-dealer in smiling recognition. Gordon

looked up dubiously. His face expressed a number of conflicting emotions, in which puzzlement, surprise, distrust and perhaps fear, predominated. But, wonder of wonders, there was no doubting that he knew the soldier. At length he took the Lieutenant's offered hand, answering his greeting.

"Hello, Gord," said the officer cheerfully. "How's the old mine going?"

"Great," declared Gordon after a pause. "I was on the point of passing you up. I didn't know you were in the army. Kinda thought you'd stay civilized-like."

Carter grinned.

"I know soldiering isn't a popular sport in these parts," he admitted, "but I thought it would be nice to come up here and be near Harry. I passed the examinations for a commission all right and came here to surprise him, only to find that he'd left. Been up with you, I suppose."

CARTER paused. Gordon looked at him closely. There was no telling what the Lieutenant might have discovered, and there was hidden menace in his friendly tone.

"I left Harry six months ago," he said slowly. "He was going to stay at the mine awhile—said something about running some kind of irrigation thing up in North Dakota."

"Tom still with you?" pursued Carter innocently.

"Aint seen Tom recently," grunted Gordon.

Carter's face grew serious.

"I could swear I saw him drop off a freight at the siding a week ago Wednesday," he commented in a puzzled voice. Gordon started, and his mouth became set and grim. On that day an unknown had battered his skull and fled, leaving traces of his partner's perfidy.

"Of course," admitted the Lieutenant. "I may be mistaken. I was looking after some horses, and I didn't pay much attention to anything else."

Gordon decided to keep silent; then he changed his mind. It may be remembered that Lot's wife turned back. The result in Gordon's case was much the same.

"No use hiding it, I guess," he told the soldier. "Jenkins double-crossed me, and I'm going to make him pay up for it."

"Keep your temper," counseled Carter with an elaborate display of indifference. "No use in old friends' falling out, you know. See you again some time."

He waved his hand in farewell and rode away, leaving the gambler to meditate upon the importance of the evidence that had just come to hand. If Jenkins had been in town a week ago last Wednesday, he need search no farther for the person responsible for the torturing ache of his head.

He strode into the Silver Heels and demanded his rifle of the bartender. Half an hour later, he rode out of Dakotah City's dusty Main Street toward the hills. He had an odd sensation that he was being followed, but the way was crooked and there was no way of telling.

TOM JENKINS lived in a comfortable shack in a cañon some five miles from Dakotah City. A simple soul was Tom. His ideas on property rights were a trifle hazy, but this defect in his moral character was supplied by an uncanny accuracy with a gun. But what Tom Jenkins wished he got.

Something of a poet was Jenkins. He really appreciated the tremendous beauty of the granite cañon in which he lived. Unlike the average sour-dough, he had an eye for the spectacular. Unconscious temperament, rather than the scientific knowledge gained through years of prospecting, had influenced him to seek as his own a placer-claim in this cañon—ignoring, according to his established custom, the rights of another man.

Once he had overcome the slight obstacles in the way of his ownership, Tom settled down to a life of pastoral simplicity, panning the creek for gold three days a week; the other four were spent in fishing for trout, cultivating a garden or gazing at the cañon through the smoke-cloud that hovered about his ancient corncob pipe.

He was cleaning a fish for his evening meal, the day that Gordon was re-

leased from the doctor's care, when the latter, weary after his ride, but none the less determined, swung from his saddle before the door of the cabin.

"Howdy, Gord," greeted the miner, unconscious of impending hostilities. "You look kinda peaked. What you been a-doin' to yourself?"

Gordon glared at him.

"You get your gun," he directed. "One of us is going to stay here for good."

Jenkins stared at him unbelievably. "Have you gone nuts?" he queried. "Do you know what you're talkin' about?"

It occurred to him that Gordon looked ill. Perhaps he was wandering about in the delirium of a fever.

"You heard me, you snake," came Gordon's harsh voice. "I don't owe you any chance for your life, but I'm giving it to you. Take it before I change my mind."

THE miner backed into the cabin, only half believing the seriousness of the situation.

"If it aint askin' too much," he said as he pushed open the door, "I'd like to know what you're a-gunnin' for me for, I gotta right to know that before you croak me."

The proposition was logical.

"You're a dirty, double-crossing, slimy toad," observed Gordon.

"That-aint proved an' aint no capital offense nohow," retorted Tom, still refusing to believe that his partner was in his right mind.

"You hit me with a poker in the Silver Heels dance-hall, a week ago Wednesday night," pursued the gambler.

"I aint misdoubtin' none that somebody hit you on the head with somethin'," agreed Jenkins amiably. "But I swear I didn't do it."

The good nature of his intended victim shook Gordon's purpose a bit. The miner noticed the flicker of doubt in his eyes.

"Hones' to Gawd, Jim," he protested, "I aint been offa this claim in a month."

"You can't lie out of it," asserted Gordon. "Here's the letter you sent to

the Makashaw company, offering to sell me out—" He tossed the folded sheet across the doorstep. Jenkins picked it up and slowly spelled out the message. He realized all at once that this was no laughing matter, that Gordon was playing a game for high stakes and that he held all the cards.

He looked up from the letter with a frightened look in his colorless eyes.

"That's my handwritin'," he confessed. "But it aint my letter."

Gordon sneered.

"That's the truth, so help me," Tom insisted. "I wrote to the Makashaw gang about that claim up the cañon. If they copped that, we'd have some capital in this here gulch an' they'd have to buy us out or quit. If I'd 'a' wanted to get you, I'd 'a' croaked you—see? I lost the letter out near the fort. Somebody's jimmed it up."

"Go get your gun," repeated Gordon, unimpressed.

"You're the doctor," observed Tom, shrugging his shoulders resignedly. Without further ado he strode into the cabin, picked up his old forty-four, examined and reloaded it. He grumbled loud enough for his protest to reach the ears of Jim Gordon, who had backed away a few paces to a shelter behind a rock.

Jenkins was snarling his opinion of friends sufficiently pig-headed to get themselves shot without reason. It broke in on one's time to murder chuckle-heads, and was too much trouble.

There was a sincerity about old Tom's remarks that brought back the faro-dealer's earlier doubts. He lowered his rifle a bit and debated the issue with himself. He was still puzzling over it when old Tom started to snake his way across the floor of the shack to an aiming-point at the doorway. He never crossed the threshold.

In an ill-advised moment he showed his head. Thereafter he lay very still.

"General" Jim Gordon, feverish and aching in every bone, climbed stiffly into his saddle and rode back to town.

DAKOTAH CITY knew, half an hour after Gordon had been put back to bed, that something had hap-

pened. In a wild delirium the gambler heaped epithets upon the head of the late lamented Thomas Jenkins, calling all whom it might concern to witness that justice had been done.

Dakotah City had reached a critical period of its existence at the time that Jim Gordon set out to have an understanding with Tom Jenkins. It boasted a town marshal, efficient despite an evil disposition, a seldom-filled jail and a courthouse. These appurtenances of the approaching civilization were still new and unfamiliar, but at the same time they played an important part in the town's existence. They did not help a great deal in the suppression of lawlessness, but they indicated a good intention of which Dakotah City was very proud.

The marshal listened to the babblings of "General" Jim at some length. After thinking the matter over carefully, he decided that the next election was sufficiently close at hand to warrant a trip of investigation.

He returned at high noon the next day, riding in solemn dignity down Main Street with all that was mortal of the late Mr. Jenkins hanging across the saddle in front of him. Half an hour later Gordon was indicted for murder in the first degree,—a legal performance doubly awesome because of its strangeness,—and the minions of the law were waiting for the defendant to regain consciousness that they might begin his trial.

On the day following there was an elaborate funeral at which Jenkins' remains were carried with much ceremony to the near-by cemetery and laid away after a eulogy, delivered by a minister from Cascade City imported for the occasion.

WHEN, a day later, Jim Gordon came back to his senses, he was promptly escorted to the courthouse to defend himself against the murder-charge before a jury of his peers. Inasmuch as only about one fifth of Dakotah City's interested populace could crowd in through the door, the judge suggested an adjournment to the Silver Heels dance-hall. The motion was carried unanimously; court attachés and

spectators moved across the street, and the saloon was seized in the name of the law.

The jury of his peers selected to try the gambler now seated disconsolately, a prisoner beside his own faro-table, may have been slightly prejudiced. The court had been entertaining suspicions for some time that the deck in use at the Silver Heels faro-bank was sanded. He had reached this opinion after the expenditure of considerable money and personal property. Some memory of this may have influenced him in the selection of the jurors, a task to which he gave personal attention. The panel when completed was made up of three men who had lost heavily to Gordon within the month, four whose toes had been trodden upon in Gordon's mining operations, two who hated the contour of Gordon's face—and the only three citizens who were known positively to be supporters of the law and order movement.

The jury was given a place on the rostrum usually presided over by the watery-eyed male nondescript who played the square piano. The judge took his place with due solemnity at a table close by.

The trial was delayed for a few minutes at the outset during an argument between the court and the ministerial bartender over the question of serving drinks during the proceedings. The bartender maintained that he had a legal right to sell liquors in the Silver Heels dance-hall. The court maintained that when the Silver Heels hall became the court of justice for Dakota County, the bar, so help him, had *ipso facto* gone out of business, and so help him, it would stay out of business. In the end the court won. The town's entire population was jammed into the building—occupying every chair, table and bench in the establishment—to see a murder-trial, not to listen to the merits of an argument on prohibition. The ministerial one subsided.

Little time was lost in preliminaries. A young assayer, impressed as prosecuting attorney, stated the case for the State.

The physician who had attended Gordon spasmodically since he had been

assaulted in the most recent Silver Heels riot was placed on the stand. He testified concerning threats made by the defendant against Tom Jenkins. Four or five others repeated similar stories. The bartender told that on the day of the murder Gordon had come into the saloon for his rifle and that he had ridden away in the direction of Tom Jenkins' claim.

Just about this time the jury displayed too violent an interest in the case and had to be silenced by the court.

THEN the State played its trump card. It called to the stand Lieutenant Carter, U. S. A.

It was the first time his name had been mentioned in connection with the case, and a wave of whispering surged over the room as he strode up to a place beside the judge's table. There were a few who remembered that Gordon had been seen talking to him. And despite his uniform, the jury was prepared to believe everything he might have to say. Gordon appeared to be painfully surprised.

"Tell what you know about this case," commanded the judge.

"My connection with it, Your Honor," answered the Lieutenant, "really begins the afternoon of the killing, although I have known Mr. Gordon for several years and have never heard a word against his character."

Gordon started. So did the judge.

"We aint worryin' about his character," suggested the court.

"Very well," went on Carter politely, although apparently with great reluctance. "I was talking to Mr. Gordon that day, and he jokingly remarked that Jenkins had double-crossed him and that he intended to 'get' Jenkins for it. I advised him not to harbor any ill-will.

"Later in the afternoon I saw Mr. Gordon ride out of town carrying a rifle. I thought that perhaps his anger might influence him to acts he might be sorry for later. So I followed him.

"He went straight to Jenkins' cañon. I did not follow him in. Instead I rode up the cliff-side to a spot a little over a

quarter of a mile this side of Jenkins' shack. An opening between two granite peaks gives a fair view of the cabin.

"I saw Gordon arguing with Jenkins. I saw Jenkins go into the shack. I saw Gordon crouch down behind a rock and raise his rifle. I saw Jenkins crawling along toward the door. He was in plain sight from where I stood, although probably hidden from Gordon until he reached the threshold. Then I heard a shot, and Gordon rode away. I went down into the cañon and found that Jenkins had been killed by a thirty-caliber soft-nose bullet. I met the marshal on the road and went back with him."

The spectators were scarcely breathing when the Lieutenant left the stand. Murder was no new thing to them, but a trial was. Despite its crudity, the drama of it held them awe-stricken.

Gordon's rifle lay on the table before the judge. It was a thirty-caliber repeater.

"Got anything to say for yourself," the judge asked the accused man. Gordon arose. "I admit I was sore at Tom," he said. "I admit I threatened to kill him. He tried to sell me out. I had good reason to kill him.

"I went to his shack to let daylight through him.

"I'm admitting all that. . . . But I didn't kill him—I didn't kill him. There was a shot, and he stiffened up in the doorway. I never pulled the trigger once."

"Nobody could get within shootin' distance of that shack without tumblin' over you," the judge reminded him. "Don't talk bosh."

AN hour later it was all over. Gordon had expiated the murder of his late partner. Dakota City was quite proud that it had upheld law and order with great skill and dignity and that the resultant hanging had been expeditiously performed. There was a grim moral in the vacant stool behind the faro-layout, but the ministerial person, lugubriously dispensing drinks, did much to dispel any reminders that might have interfered with business.

Captain Reno and Lieutenant Carter

stopped for a moment in the brakes where a few weeks ago they had found the remains of the Lieutenant's brother.

"I'm going to leave here next week, Captain," the Lieutenant said suddenly.

"Huh?" exclaimed Reno. "Why?"

"My work here's done. I've been in the service of the State Department and got the assignment to this post on a sort of furlough. I'm not an honest-to-Pete soldier.

"Those two fellows," continued Carter with a grim smile, "are the ones who murdered my brother. They shot the fourth partner in a mining-deal and jumped the claims for themselves. He got away and lived long enough to tell me of it, and I came out here to settle the debt. I wasn't sure of the law, especially with my only witness dead, and so I went about it the best way I could."

"And so you set them at one another's throats," observed the Captain admiringly.

Carter shook his head.

"Not exactly," he replied. "I went a little farther. When you want anything done right, it's best to do it yourself. Take this rifle, for instance." He held up his gun. "Very few people can shoot with it."

"I know that," grinned the Captain. "The marshal and I tested it out while you were on the stand. You'd be safe in saying that nobody can shoot with it."

For answer the Lieutenant pointed to a buzzard poised in the air so high up that it appeared like a tiny V against the sky. He raised his rifle, aimed carelessly and fired. The bird fell like a plummet. Captain Reno gasped.

"I had almost forgotten," said Carter, "that the windage-gauge and sights on this gun are set wrong. In order to hit anything, you have to aim about two feet to one side of the target.

"I'm not such an expert rifleman that I'd brag about it, as you know. But I have succeeded in hitting a man's head at a quarter of a mile."

Other buzzards were circling out of the blue peaks toward Dakota City. In that mysterious manner known only to buzzards, they had become informed of the hanging.



by
Andrew Soufar

FOR some considerable time Mr. Amos Gattrill had made up his mind to the utter futility of trying to shake off the menacing shadow that followed him wherever he might go. He had become, not inured to it, but hardened to the degree of wishing that the Thing would overtake him, draw level and assume material form so that he might grapple with it.

He never heard the sound when he was in the company of, say, a fellow magistrate on the way back from court, or when one of the foremen in his plush-factory or a friend accompanied him along the white highroad to his house. But the moment he was alone, and no matter how boisterous the elements, he heard the stealthy footfall some twenty paces behind him. Frequently he would stop and test the suppleness of his wrist by swishing the loaded cane that he always carried with him. But the footfall behind would come to a halt, to be resumed only when Gattrill went on.

It was the same in his house, when the servants had retired. He would hear the furtive *pad-pad* of stockinged feet along the corridor, then the sound of faint breathing just behind the closed door of the study. In the beginning—this had been going on for years—he used to reach quietly to the bell, and when the butler came he would order some minor service, and even invite the butler to sit down,

smoke a cigar and give him a long and detailed account of what had been going on in the house while the master was at the plush-factory. Then, being tired, he would say: "I'll go to bed, Harris. See that Noah is made comfortable." The mastiff slept on the mat at the door of Gattrill's bedroom.

Gattrill was not old,—probably fifty,—and he was well-favored in features. There was dignity in the spread of his shoulders and in the habit he had of holding his head slightly to one side. His hair was worn long, and his beard was of a deep bronze color. He was a bachelor.

THE court had been listening to the evidence in what is known as a "long firm fraud," and it was late and dark before it rose. Mr. Dicksey, one of the magistrates, walked part of the way home with Gattrill, and sympathetically referred to the "wearing" of his friend. Gattrill was in the mood to make a confidant of anyone, and he told Dicksey of the pursuing phantom.

"It's worse in the study than in the open," he said; "there is a stupid, hazy idea that every minute some one's fingers will appear around the jamb of the door."

"Nerves," said Mr. Dicksey; "you've been trying to do too much. . . . Business good?"

"Never better."

"Then get away for a holiday. Let your factory look after itself for a

while. You're the last man in the world to be menaced; but it's generally the case: extremes! Why, your name was mentioned in the House, the other week, by one who is as near to a revolutionary as it is possible to be without touching actual treason. He spoke of the model factory of Amos Gattrill. What of that?"

"I have always tried to study my employees," said Gattrill modestly.

THEY parted company, halfway to the house. Only twice during the remainder of the walk did Gattrill spring to one side and raise his cane, crying: "Now, confound you! Come on!"

Harris, the butler, was most attentive, solicitous, that night, but Gattrill was impatient, fidgety, and eventually ordered the man out of his presence.

The factory was far from being "model;" he had lied when he told Dicksey that business had never been better. The whole fabric was worn to a shred; rash attempts to better a broken fortune had flung him nearer than ever to bankruptcy.

There were five hundred employees, and not one that didn't trust Amos Gattrill with the faith of a child in a parent. He had never overpaid them, but he had taught them the grandeur of thrift. He had been so unselfish that he had drawn up a scheme by which they might become, every one of them, a shareholder in the concern. Their savings were intrusted to him; their scrapings and denials, turned into cash, were held by him—he being the treasurer of their funds—their "society."

The savings were invested in the business, and shares were allotted. He was the financial monarch of a little kingdom of workers. He wasn't doubted. He was a magistrate. Frequently he gave up his time to visiting those who depended on the factory, and he never lost an opportunity of impressing on them the beauties of thrift and self-denial. All the while, he was gambling with their savings.

HARRIS brought word from the footman that a visitor was in the hall, a lady.

Gattrill glanced at the card, then shut his eyes tightly.

The visitor was shown into the study, and Harris was told that he might retire for the night.

A woman of Gattrill's age, perhaps. She glanced around the study and gnawed at her lips. Then:

"I said, in my poor heart, that I would not care if I never saw you again—but we are frail, we women."

"Somehow, I've been expecting you, Yvonne." He smiled, like one who is suddenly relieved from fear.

"After ten years?"

"Ten years! Never mind the passing of time. How's Paris?"

"You are pretending, M'sieur."

"No, I'm touching *reality* for the first time in years and years."

"Do you know why I have come?" The slightest trace of accent lent a charm to her speech; the charm was enhanced for him, since the drab of ten years' life in a small factory town had begun to corrode his mind. She was attractive, too, in spite of the weariness of the big eyes.

"Somehow, I've been expecting you," he said again. "I've been expecting some one for months—years."

"Emil?"

"No; . . . I don't think so."

"It is about Emil that I have come to speak to you."

"The Andaman Islands are very far away, Yvonne; and your countrymen are very careful custodians. Poor Emil! Ten years. . . . It amazes me that any prisoner serves out a sentence in that penal settlement."

"Emil will not serve his."

"Dead?" He leaned forward, tightening his hold on the chair.

"No—free. He has been pardoned. He helped to quell a rebellion."

"Free? He was there for life!"

"Free, and coming back."

"To do—what?"

"I came to warn you. He is not likely to have forgotten."

GATTRILL breathed heavily; but there was no sign of fear in his voice as he said:

"I satisfied the court of my innocence in the affair."

"What was it that you promised Emil—your friend—my husband?"

"Ten years is a long stretch of time, Yvonne."

"Memory is longer. He believed in your promise to succor the wife and the children, and so he kept silent when he was questioned about the partner in his fraud. He knows the truth, now."

"You wrote to him?"

"Maybe. I forget all that I did in my years of misery. I wanted sympathy. You had betrayed him—his friendship—and taken everything from his wife and children. Why—why, you even threatened with a charge of blackmail the woman whom you had taught to regard you as—as a 'compensation' for all that she had lost. . . . Emil will forgive me—I know he will. But what of you?"

He studied her face, seeking diligently for untruthfulness. Then he said: "But why should you come to warn me, if all this were true—this story of his being pardoned? Your attitude should be that of vindictiveness."

"Ah! You admit that, M'sieur?"

"Assuming that your complaints about my behavior were based on something more than imagination, why should you have warned me?"

She was looking past him as she said: "I suppose it is impossible for you to understand my attitude. I came because, even in my sadness, I was able to remember a few minutes of joy in your presence, and set their value against the misery of years. If you are without soul, it will not be easy for you to assimilate that phase of a woman's character."

HE remained quiet for a while. Then suddenly, as if the idea had just occurred to him, he asked her:

"Is he actually in England—in Europe? How long has he been home?"

As he asked the question, his eyes glanced nervously at the door, as if he half-expected to see those phantom fingers.

She rose, saying: "I do not know, M'sieur. Enough that I have warned you."

"You are not going?"

"Why should I stay?"

"I don't know," he said, in a frightened voice; "but I, too, feel the need of a little sympathy just now."

"And, selfishly, you would appeal to me for it? Listen, M'sieur—"

"Why do you say that?"

"Listen!" She shook her head testily. "When I wanted sympathy, I was in an empty room in a flat in Clichy, with one child ill on my knee, and one boy, the bravest little fellow that ever lived, had gone out into the streets of Paris to try to beg enough to buy us our last meal of the day. He never came back. Indeed, I never saw him again. He had been injured in the street, and died in the hospital before I had recovered consciousness. They who brought the news of the accident told it brutally, because, I suppose, I was poor. I wanted sympathy then. Where were you?"

"What have you been doing since then?" he asked, in the tone of one ready to make amends for the past.

"That," she said, with great dignity, "I shall tell Emil when he returns."

"Then he hasn't returned?" said Gattrill, quickly and eagerly.

"You are at liberty to think what you please," she said. "Some women, having suffered as I have done, would have had nothing but hatred in their hearts for you; but I derived some strange sort of satisfaction from proving to you that I was the stronger of the two, ten years ago, when we were both weak. Do you understand that?"

She left him a few moments later. She would not allow him to come to the lodge gates. He listened at the open window, and—fancy again—he was certain that he heard, or *felt*, the ghostly footstep, now following her, halting when she halted, and going on when she resumed the walk.

GATTRILL kept to his rooms during the next three days, and in the whole of that time his mind was applied to the one idea: how to free himself from all that threatened.

He was not unduly alarmed by the warning that Emil Videaux was returning. The affair of ten years ago in

which he had been implicated was not likely again to be dragged up by the courts, for since that time he had been able to obliterate, as it were, a long period of irresponsible life in Paris.

In the ten years many achievements of a civic nature had been recorded to his credit. Moreover, he doubted that Emil Videaux would invite further investigation. What could he gain by it? Maneuvering his magisterial mind, Gattrill decided that Videaux would be so overcome by his unexpected freedom that he would keep as far away as possible from the precincts of any court, lest some incident, forgotten by him, might arise out of his lust for revenge and implicate him anew.

No, Emil Videaux was not Gattrill's greatest fear. The tottering factory, the investments badly made, the almost total hopelessness of being able to restore the plundered funds of the trusting people—all these things gathered themselves together and fashioned themselves into a sword from which he flinched. And the irony of it all was this: that while a man in poor circumstances, or, say, who had never occupied similar positions of trust, might escape with light punishment, all those very civic achievements of his would now be used against him. The fact that he was a magistrate would not be a defense. The old platitudes that he himself had often thrown at a prisoner in the dock, about betrayed trust, would be flung at him in turn.

So, in those three days, Amos Gattrill applied his mind to the evolving of a plan that should deceive the law itself. The idea of taking his own life never occurred to him. That might be regarded as cowardice or strength. This much is to be said for him as a magistrate: he had thrown his whole heart and soul into the work; he had taken unusual interest in each prisoner that had come before him; he had studied them, even talked to them and questioned them in their cells. It was a study in psychology that had been made almost unconsciously, and to that study he now looked for help that appeared to be denied him in every other direction. In effect, he sought to blend the craftiness and subtlety of the habit-

ual lawbreaker with the careful, calculating and discriminating mind of the magistrate who has made something more than a custom of his visits to the court.

THE plan to disappear and pass out of life was based really on a piece of fact. He had told Mr. Dicksey, the fellow magistrate, of the shadow that followed him about. Mr. Dicksey had regarded it as hallucination, the result of disordered nerves, but it was quite easy to imagine Mr. Dicksey saying at a later date: "I wonder if his fear was based on something more than mere fancy?"

The conversation with Mr. Dicksey might be termed a starting-point in the maze-like plan that Gattrill evolved. He was fully aware of this: while it is comparatively easy to die, it is the most difficult thing in the world to pretend to die. Frequently he had read of cases in which men and women had tried to evade responsibilities by arranging a sham accident, and he had always found something to smile at in the tiny flaws through which those plans were frustrated. He was determined to exercise the whole of his ingenuity in the deceiving of the world. He endeavored to foresee all the difficulties and to work out methods by which they could be combated.

Out in British Columbia there was a woman on a fruit-farm—a woman who had been in his service as a housemaid. Her husband had died some months previously. He wrote to her, saying that a friend of his, a man of the name of James Byerley, would be calling on her with the idea of staying at her fruit-farm for a year or two, in the hope of building up a broken constitution. Following that he arranged for a banking-account to be opened in Vancouver in Byerley's name.

Then he began to realize his property, or, rather, to mortgage it; in fact, with great subtlety he was able to raise more than one loan on the same property. Working quickly, and with extraordinary care and foresight, he managed to forward to the Vancouver bank considerable sums to be paid into the account of James Byerley.

The crowning act of criminality was to apply to his own ends as much as possible of the money that remained to the workers' society of which he was treasurer. From first to last, he had not a shred of compassion for the men, women and children who were dependent on the factory for their bread. He took everything on which he could put his hand, but was clever enough to mask his movements and operations so that the factory would be able to go on for at least a week after he had disappeared. It says much for his nerve that the day before he left the town he entered into a contract with a firm of builders to add a new weaving-shed to the plush-factory.

WHEN all his financial arrangements were complete, when there was nothing now to do save pass out of life, he commenced the task that appealed to him mightily because of its melodramatic interest.

There was a stretch of rugged coast some four miles distant from Gattrill's house. A narrow pathway connected two coast-guard stations. At one point the path nearly touched the edge of the cliff. Over it there was a sheer drop of nearly two hundred feet. For some years this pathway had been greatly favored by Gattrill. He loved to walk from one coast-guard station to another, especially of an evening. He knew the coast-guards by name, and frequently stopped to talk with them about their duties.

On the evening selected for the great enterprise he took with him a small portmanteau, containing a shaving outfit and a complete change of new clothing—a light suit, whereas never during his ten years' residence in the district had he been known to dress in other than somber-hued clothes. He was well furnished with ready money.

When he reached the beginning of the path it was getting dusk. A coast-guard who had just returned from point duty recognized him and gave him "Good evening." Gattrill stopped and spoke cheerily.

"It's very quiet to-night, Halsey," he said.

"Yes sir," said Halsey, "—too quiet

to make the path safe, to-night. Shouldn't be surprised if we get a mist up, quick and sudden-like."

"Ah, well, Halsey, I think I know the path pretty well by now."

"None better," said Halsey. "But you know what a sea-mist is."

"Now, don't try to frighten me out of one of the pleasures of my life, Halsey! The sky looks clear enough. I want a walk." And so he passed on.

MIDWAY between the coast-guard stations there was a break in the cliffs. There he halted, and looking at his watch, estimated that he had nearly an hour in which to get through his work before the second coast-guard passed the point on his way to meet his mate.

He worked quickly and smoothly. It was not so easy to remove the thick brown beard as he had expected. Indeed, it was a very painful process. When the task was over, however, the little hand-mirror showed him a face that was not likely to be recognized even if he had turned and walked back into the town. He smiled at it, remarking to himself: "How thin you are, Byerley! That bush of a beard used to give you the appearance of a chubby, well-fed country magnate; now you look thin and hawklike. And that scar across the chin, relic of a schoolday prank, is redder to-day than when it was caused."

He changed his clothes, and left the old hat and coat lying on the grass near the edge of the cliff. The tweed cap that he now wore had a broad peak, which, coming down over his brows, cast a shadow over his eyes. He rid himself of the portmanteau by throwing it into the sea, but first of all threw the contents in separately.

He set out on his walk to the other end of the path full of confidence. From the second coast-guard station he would be able to cross a field and reach the highroad that would take him on to the next town. A mist came up suddenly, even as the coast-guard had warned him, but he was more than grateful for it; it fitted in with the rest of his scheme.

He met the second coast-guard, and

spoke to him, making but little effort to alter his voice. He spoke of the mist, said that he had been lying on the cliffs for some hours admiring the sunset, and supposed that he must have fallen asleep.

He passed on across the field, reached the highroad and journeyed to the next town in a milk-van. Before midnight he was in Dover, and just about the time one coast-guard summoned the other to examine the hat and coat that had been left on the edge of the cliff, Gattrill was on the cross-Channel boat.

Halsey, the coast-guard, said to his companion: "I spoke to Mr. Gattrill as he passed me. No one else entered the path from my end."

The other coast-guard said: "I never saw Mr. Gattrill. He didn't reach my station. There was only one man who passed me—a thin-faced fellow, with a red scar on the chin. I noticed that scar particularly, because I asked him for a match and lit up my pipe while I was standing near him."

"Was he a stranger to you?" asked Halsey.

"Never seen him before in my life," said the other. "I should say he was a stranger to the district, because he inquired his whereabouts."

GATTRILL stayed in Paris one night and then journeyed to Marseilles. He traveled second-class, both in the train and on the intermediate steamship that he boarded at Marseilles. He did not encourage the other passengers to talk to him, but after cleverly giving the impression that he was suffering in health and compelled to avoid anything like rigorous exertion, he kept to his cabin, studying still further the new Amos Gattrill, or, rather, James Byerley.

Egypt—India—China—and then Japan. His method was to book from port to port, taking a fresh boat every time. Fully twelve months passed before he reached British Columbia.

In all that time he had studiously avoided English newspapers. He did not wish to read any account of what had been discovered on the cliffs at home. He understood the danger of

unconsciously betraying oneself by trying to disprove descriptions—that is, a "missing" man with a limp, reading a description of himself issued by the authorities, will wear himself almost to death in trying to stop the limp, and succeed only in emphasizing it—and so on.

Everything worked with mathematical precision. So far as he could see, there was not a single flaw in his plans. He arrived at the fruit-farm, and awarded himself another laurel-leaf when the woman who had once been in his employment showed utter ignorance of his identity. The letters which had been sent to her from home were very explicit. She had carried out all the instructions contained in them. She talked to him of Mr. Gattrill, and of the kindnesses she had received at his hands.

On the farm some twenty hands were employed, and the arrival of James Byerley was in the nature of a blessing to the woman, who, since her husband's death, had bravely managed the whole of the work. Byerley was ready, not only to enter into the work of fruit-farming, but to lend financial assistance, if necessary. The homestead was large and well-appointed.

In accordance with instructions sent out in behalf of Byerley, a bungalow was in course of erection half a mile from the homestead. Until it was ready he was at liberty to choose the best rooms in her establishment.

Not the slightest flaw anywhere, until he had been in British Columbia six months. Then the old haunting fear returned. He began to listen for sounds that were never made, and to watch the door of the room in which he was sitting. He became nervous and fretful, and began to go over the plans step by step to satisfy himself that there was no weak spot.

THEN came the end. It came suddenly, so suddenly that he hadn't time to cry out in alarm. He was sitting on the veranda at the time. The other man came round the end of the house so quickly that Gattrill made no effort to rise from the cane chair. Emil Videaux sprang up the steps to the

veranda, and in a voice that was delightfully attuned to the softness of the evening, he said:

"How do you do, Gattrill?"

Videaux was tall and spare. There was great strength reflected in the shoulders and the well-set head and neck. Gattrill appeared to realize that there was nothing to be gained by denying his identity.

"So you've found me out?" he said.

"Oh, yes!" said Videaux, quite politely. "I should have found you if it had meant giving up the rest of my life to the search. . . . Don't attempt to rise from your chair. You present so amusing a picture sitting there. You're not nearly so handsome without your beard, Gattrill. Shall we talk here?"

"As you please," said Gattrill, sullenly.

Videaux's eyes were full of a quiet laughter and contempt.

"You've cost me a lot of money," he said, reproachfully. "I've followed you from port to port, losing the trail here and picking it up there. When Yvonne told me about the cliff business, I confess that I was almost deceived, because some men might have been tempted to take their lives if they had been similarly situated. But I knew you so well. You had behaved so cowardly to me and mine that I couldn't conceive of your having the courage to take the leap, even when your business was shaking to its fall. It requires resolution to take one's life, unless the brain is disordered."

GATTRILL'S face was very pale. Reading the mind through the eyes, it was plain that he still believed himself beyond the reach of the law.

"Tell me what you are going to do," he said.

"I don't know that I'm going to do anything," said Videaux. "My work is done. I've found you. It is now for the authorities to take up your case."

Gattrill laughed, but it was a very mirthless laugh.

"Amos Gattrill is dead," he said. "What can the authorities do to a dead man?"

"Gattrill may be dead," said Videaux, with curious irony, "but the law will

find a way to avenge the unfortunate creatures who were robbed of their life's savings, defrauded, humbugged, by a hypocritical magistrate who has lived for self ever since I met him first; and I doubt that his previous life was any better."

Again Gattrill laughed.

"Tell me," he said mockingly: "how does one bring a charge of fraud against a dead man?"

Videaux paid no attention to the question.

"Such misery, Gattrill," he said, "you left behind you. Would you believe it, my own heart, that has been made so bitter by my sufferings in the Andaman Islands, was touched by the sights I witnessed in that town of yours. They believed that you had gone over the cliff."

"Suicide?"

"I don't say that. It was quickly realized that all your affairs were water-logged. You had mortgaged everything, robbed everybody. It is not often that one hears bitter words leveled against the dead, but the name of Gattrill poisoned the ears. If they could have found the body, if the tide hadn't carried it out to sea, I believe they would have set it up in the marketplace and burned it as they would an effigy."

"Yes, yes," Gattrill broke in excitedly, for now his mind was beginning to reel; "but tell me how the law proposes to prosecute a dead man."

"They don't intend to do anything of the sort."

"I thought not!"

THEY would have given you ten years' imprisonment for your frauds if it hadn't been for that affair on the cliff. That was cleverly worked, Gattrill—I will give you credit for a certain amount of genius. You see, I am not at all vindictive. There was a time when I believed that I lived in order that I might kill you, but that is all done with now. The suffering made of me a philosopher. And Yvonne, whom you treated so brutally, has helped me to climb up and up. I wouldn't injure my own happiness at the moment by striking you. I wouldn't

give the law a chance to put its hand on my shoulder again.

"You may think me mad, Gattrill, but I am going to tell you of something that may lead you to believe still more firmly that I am out of my mind. Your liabilities came to over ten thousand. I liquidated every one of them. The factory is now being run under my control and with my money. I reimbursed the wretched 'society' that you robbed so mercilessly.

"But how could—" began Gattrill perplexedly.

"How could I do it? During those long years in the Andaman Islands, I applied the brains that I was supposed to possess, to invention. When I was pardoned, I discovered, to my amazement, that there were men in the world ready to give an under-dog another chance. . . .

"That is as much as I need tell you, Gattrill. The little town is prosperous, to-day. They have forgotten the name of Gattrill. Prosperity dulls the memory as nothing else can. . . . Are you interested to learn that Yvonne and I are supremely happy?"

"Then why have you come to torture me?"

"Torture you? Oh, no, Gattrill. You have been torturing yourself. Your plan of escape was a clever one. I almost brought myself to believe that you had defeated the law and me. Then, of a sudden, I made a discovery that caused me to shriek with merriment. There was a flaw, which could not have been apparent to you at the time; and all that you have done since the night you left that little town has been to entwine yourself with bindweed. Every move that you made was an additional strand. Yes, I should say that the law could send you, Amos Gattrill, to prison for a very long period for the frauds that you perpetrated. But that is not the irony of it all."

Gattrill was shifting restlessly in his chair.

"But you yourself admit that they believe me to be dead."

"They do," said Videaux, and again he laughed. "I told you, just now, the people have forgotten you. To them you are dead, and their wrongs have been righted. But why should they trouble to take you back?"

"Ah! why, indeed?"

"Do you know the authorities do not believe that you committed suicide? Oh! it's a lovely piece of irony! You will have to go back, Gattrill, and what is more, you may take your choice of two trials, but you can't escape them both. Oh! was there ever such glorious irony? Bindweed—you're simply tied up with it. One minute." He leaned over the rail of the veranda and whistled. Two men who had been awaiting the signal came quickly round the corner.

GATTRILL rose to his feet. Emil Videaux stepped back from him, and looking at the men, said:

"There, gentlemen, is your prisoner."

One of the men, as he grasped Gattrill's two wrists firmly, said in official tones:

"You appear to answer to the description given by the coast-guard in every detail. James Byerley, or whatever your name is, *I arrest you on a charge of murdering Amos Gattrill eighteen months ago.*"

There followed the harsh click of metal.

"Bindweed!" laughed Emil Videaux, as he looked down at the manacled wrists. "Bindweed! Lord! What irony!" And shaking with laughter, he made his way down the steps of the veranda.

"Now," said one of the two men to Gattrill.

He walked between them.





RANSOM!

*A Mystery Novel by the
Author of "Loot"*

by Arthur Somers Roche

(What has already happened.)

BY rescuing a young American girl from the attentions of a Paris café rowdy, Waring started big trouble. After fighting their way out of the place, he escorted the girl to her hotel in a cab; and he learned from her that she was in Paris with her Uncle Peter Randall.

Next morning Waring read in *The Paris Herald* of the defalcation and suicide in New York, of Carey-Haig—the broker who handled his money.

Waring hurried back to New York. There he found that the only record of what had become of the money Haig had embezzled was a memorandum of Haig's having paid one Simon Bergson the sum of \$1,450,000 on January 26th.

One day Waring found a man bending over his letter-box and was astonished to recognize him as "Raoul the Red," the Apache from whom he had rescued Peter Randall's niece in Paris. Raoul broke away and ran outside—directly in front of a passing taxi.

When Waring and the chauffeur picked the Frenchman up he was dying. An envelope was found on him bearing the address of Simon Bergson, the man to whom Haig had paid over the embezzled funds. Inside this envelope was a letter signed with the initials "P. R.," introducing the bearer, Raoul Carvajal, as a man of daring who would be useful to "the Society."

Waring realized that he strongly resembled the dead Carvajal—red hair and all. A little alteration of his clothing, and he stood on the doorstep of

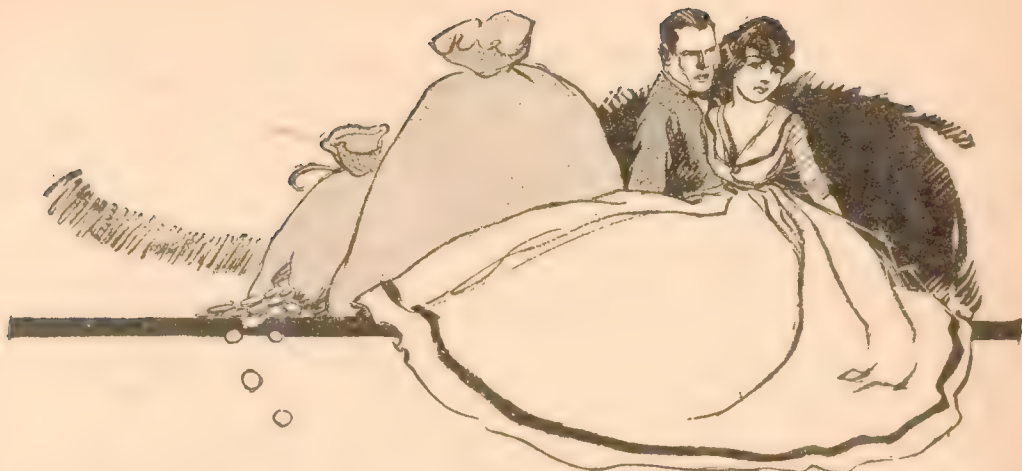
Simon Bergson, determined himself to present "P. R.'s" letter introducing Carvajal. Waring's scheme was successful. He was accepted as Carvajal and made an employee of the Society.

BURTON CONYBEAR, one of the wealthiest men in the country, received a letter signed "The Readjustment Society of the World" and demanding a hundred million dollars. He called in two detectives who—with Henderson, his private secretary—proved themselves to be members of this mysterious society and who, on Conybear's refusal to pay the money, kidnaped him. He was taken to a rendezvous at Bergson's house. Thence, escorted by "Carvajal" and others of the Society, he was taken to a bank, where he was compelled to draw twenty-five thousand dollars for them.

Herkomer, Commissioner of Police, received a note picked up by a half-witted fellow just outside Conybear's estate and signed by the financier, stating that he had been kidnaped. Herkomer called up Conybear's house and was told by Henderson that Mr. Conybear was all right. So Herkomer concluded the note was only a hoax.

Waring, too, left Bergson under a pretext and 'phoned Conybear's house. And again Henderson, answering the 'phone, prevented Conybear's rescue. Aware that Waring was betraying the Society, he sent him to an address on Camp Avenue, another rendezvous of the Society.

Waring unsuspectingly proceeded thither. And the door was opened for



him by the girl of the Paris café! Waring learned from her that her uncle, Peter Randall, was a member of the Society—and then Bergson entered. "Carvajal" contrived to explain his presence to Bergson and left.

Waring met his friend Sinsabaugh, who asked him to dinner—saying that he wished his friend to meet a *niece of Peter Randall named Claire Sorel*, who was visiting his wife! Vastly perplexed, Waring accepted the invitation—and found this Miss Sorel an entirely different person from the girl of Paris and of Camp Avenue. He had little time to make her acquaintance, however, for the butler reported a police officer at the door with a warrant for Waring's arrest; and Sinsabaugh was barely able to delay the officer long enough for Waring to escape.

And Waring was now in deadly peril from the other side also, for Bergson had put two and two together and at last guessed that "Carvajal" was Waring. And Bergson promptly sent two men after him to murder him.

Waring went to the Plutonia, registered under the name of Pelletier,—and meets there *Claire Sorel*—his Claire, the girl of the Paris café. She tells him Bergson's men are on his trail and that he must seek police aid immediately. They enter a taxi together; and then Waring is struck a heavy blow on the head and loses consciousness.

That night Commissioner Herkomer was called by telephone and told that two officers sent to Waring's apartment had been murdered, along with Waring's Japanese servant. Later Herko-

mer traced Waring to the Plutonia, and from the house-detective there learned of his departure with a lady in a taxi. Malcolm, president of the Seventy-third National, 'phoned Herkomer that Wall Street had learned of Conybear's kidnaping and that a panic had started. Herkomer hurried to interview Malcolm, and was told that the panic threatened disaster and that he simply must find Conybear to quell it.

Herkomer now has Sinsabaugh brought in and by questioning him learns how Waring escaped. The Commissioner also has the half-wit brought before him again, with only minor success. Next a message from the chief of the U. S. secret service—describing Peter Randall as a government agent in Paris, working to frustrate a great plot—further complicates Herkomer's ideas. And then comes a great and accidental simplification:

Mrs. Sinsabaugh happens to see Burton Conybear being taken into a private hospital and 'phones Herkomer about it. Promptly the Commissioner 'phones for the policemen in the neighborhood to watch the place and then he races thither in his car:

(Here the story continues in detail.)

CHAPTER XVI

TWO automobiles, crowded with plain-clothes men, stood at Sixth Avenue and Fiftieth Street. Two others, similarly crowded, stood at Fifth Avenue and the same street. Four others debouched a

score of officers within a few doors of where Herkomer's automobile had stopped.

Kelcey, the secret-service man, Lieutenant Dan McGaw and a plain-clothes man followed Herkomer up the steps of the Clarkson Private Hospital. A glance down the street, just before he rang the bell, showed to Herkomer the slim figure of a woman expostulating with one of the officers guarding the approach. Doubtless Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh, anxious to be in at the death! For the electric light under which she stood showed her to be most expensively appareled.

Mrs. Willy was game to the point of recklessness. Herkomer smiled. But appreciation of Mrs. Willy's merits could wait a later time. He rang the bell.

For a moment after the door opened Herkomer was inclined to believe that a wild-goose chase had brought him here. Under the softening light above, the white-garbed nurse who opened the door seemed innocent, seemed, by her very ministering presence, to make his errand fantastically bizarre.

"Dr. Clarkson in?"

"Dr. Clarkson has retired," was the answer.

"Some one else, then."

"We receive no patients save by engagement," was the answer.

The nurse gently closed the door. But Herkomer's foot held it partly open.

"I want to come in," he said.

And then the whole manner of the demure nurse changed. Her face grew hard, vicious. She threw her whole weight against the door. But she was one woman, and there were five men opposed to her already, with reinforcements loitering outside. Herkomer broke through the door.

But the white-garbed woman eluded him—leaped backward. There must have been a button in the wall, for two iron doors shot forward to meet and bar the way. Herkomer had paused involuntarily as the woman broke from his detaining clutch, and it was this that saved him from being crushed between the two sheets of steel. And the fact that the plain-clothes man had thrust a night-stick forward—he had had expe-

rience with gambling-dens as elaborately guarded as this "hospital"—held the two iron doors apart.

The mechanism was thus deranged. There was no need of the hydraulic jacks that one of the police automobiles carried. The doors would undoubtedly have been a strong barrier had they met, but parted—they rolled back easily. Herkomer led the way into the hall just in time to see the figure of the nurse turn the corner at the head of the first flight of stairs.

He did not hesitate, but mounted the stairs. The woman's flight seemed to give certain proof that Mrs. Sinsabaugh was right, but the Commissioner could not help wondering what would lie behind that turn, one flight above. Nothing, he thought, could surprise him—and yet he was surprised.

FOR standing in the doorway of a room stood a lean, eagle-nosed, sunken-eyed man. The revolver that he held in his hand was to have been expected; it was his calm that amazed Herkomer. Had he shouted, had he threatened, Herkomer would have hurled himself forward. But the unhurried utterance, the calm evenness of the man's voice, halted Herkomer.

"Stop—please. You have found me. There is no haste."

He did not menace with his weapon. He seemed to know that a threatening gesture with it would mean an overwhelming rush that he might stop in part, but not in its entirety. The very fact that he held the revolver loosely in his hand, at his side, made him seem more dangerous.

Herkomer labored for his breath, lost in the dash upstairs. He held back, by his own halt, the men behind him.

"You are under arrest," he said. "It will go easier with you if you put up that revolver."

"So?" The lean man smiled cruelly. "I think not." He eyed Herkomer closely. "You may take my word for it that the men you come in search of are alive. They are here; there is no need for haste. If you move toward me—"

The revolver in his hand seemed to spring upward of its own volition. But

it did not point at Herkomer. It pointed into the room that the lean man guarded. And the lean man had shifted his position as the revolver had flashed upward.

"Mr. Burton Conybear," said the lean man, "will you kindly inform these gentlemen that you are alive?"

"And will you kindly point that damn' thing the other way?" sounded the irascible voice of Conybear.

Herkomer sighed with relief. He knew Conybear's voice; he had heard it at many a banquet. The man facing him was a maniac—no question of that; Conybear's life hung on Herkomer's tact; but Conybear had lived thus far through kidnaping and what-not beside, and Herkomer felt that he could deal with the man before him.

Testy, defiant, blustering, yet somehow assuring its hearer, no matter what words it used, that calm courage backed the sound—that was Conybear's voice. And the words he used and the threat of the revolver were proof complete that Conybear, despite appearance, *had* been kidnaped, had *not* created panic merely to fatten his purse.

"Don't worry, Mr. Conybear," cried Herkomer. "This is the Commissioner of Police, and—"

"I will talk, please," said the man in the doorway. "You will listen."

His lips curled back as he surveyed Herkomer.

"You have caught me—yes. But to what purpose, while I have Mr. Conybear—so?"

His revolver accented the word "so."

"But you know we have you cornered," said Herkomer persuasively, as though humoring a child.

"Bah! There is a corner always open, one corner in which your men cannot stand. A pressure of a trigger, and I have passed through the door in that corner—taking your Conybear with me."

Out of the side of his mouth Kelcey spoke. Barely audible, the words reached Herkomer's ear.

"I can get him through my pocket, Commissioner. Say the word."

Herkomer, by the faintest movement of his head, negatived the suggestion. Kelcey might miss, and Conybear then would die.

"But you don't want to die just yet, do you?" asked Herkomer.

The lean man shrugged his shoulders. "Now or later! What matters it when one has failed?" He eyed Herkomer. "If one has failed. Listen!" His words were brisk, crisp, now, no longer sardonically weary.

"How much is Mr. Conybear worth to you—alive?"

HERKOMER hesitated. When he answered, he spoke to Conybear. If there were to be risk in this rescue, Conybear ought to be permitted to buy insurance against risk. Compromising with the law, with justice, is wrong, but human life is very valuable to the possessor.

"What do you say, Mr. Conybear?" he asked. It was absurd to haggle with a madman, but—it might be more absurd not to do so. Herkomer was the sort of man that hesitated to strike a friend with a club in order to kill a mosquito enjoying a siesta on the head of the friend.

"Say? Why you blasted nincompoop, you've found me, haven't you? And if you can't drill a hole in him before he can get me—good Lord, I've toed the mark for this crazy lunatic, with a gun sticking in my ribs or within an inch of my head, until I'm sick of it. But I didn't have no gun at all when they handed me this deal! You *got* a gun! Go to it, and—"

Herkomer's revolver was out, and he was firing as he ran forward, drowning Conybear's words with the crash. Beyond one shot at the Commissioner, the lean man paid no attention to Herkomer's rush, or to his shots; he leaped into the room. And Herkomer, gaining the doorway, felt his right hand grow suddenly numb; his revolver clattered to the floor, and he stood there blocking the way of his followers.

It was weeks before he could gain proper perspective to revisualize that room again, before he could reduce the whole picture to its component parts. Then he could get in detail what just now he got only in the mass.

Burton Conybear sat in an armchair, his legs and hands manacled. He was moving his body from side to side to

avoid the shots that the lean man fired at him. This, or the end of this scene, was what Herkomer entered upon. Then a door across the room burst open; through it came a red-haired young man whom Herkomer knew to be Waring.

Waring hurled himself upon the lean man. From still another door came the woman in the nurse's dress. She fired at Waring; and from that same door came another young woman who seized the arm of the nurse; the spitting revolver swayed toward Herkomer; instinctively he ducked. But something struck him heavily over the left temple; he reeled into the arms of Kelcey; then a rush of men, his men, went by him, and Herkomer lost consciousness.

THE rasp of a file, and the sound of a voice that sounded as harsh as the working steel, broke in upon Herkomer's consciousness. He sat up, and a ringing in his brain made him dizzy. He fell back into strong arms; he looked up; the wrinkled visage of Kelcey was close to his face. He could see tears in Kelcey's eyes, though the lips of Kelcey framed a grin.

"Feelin' fine, Commissioner? Sure you are. Nothin' wrong but a lick on the mitt and a dab on the bean. Sit up?"

The ringing and the dizziness died away. Herkomer sat up. He looked about him. There was a blood-stain on the rug before him. He looked away. He had seen violence before, but he had never been part of violence until tonight—or this morning. Which was it?

"What time is it?" he asked Kelcey.

"You aint been lyin' here fifteen minutes, Commissioner," reassured Kelcey.

"Conybear?"

"That's him talkin'."

Through an open door Herkomer saw the grizzled old financier. He was sitting at a desk, telephoning; and as he talked, a man whom Herkomer recognized as a police chauffeur was filing away at the irons that held Conybear's feet together.

"Right!" Conybear was saying. "We'll bust this panic higher than a kite by ten-fifteen o'clock in the morning. I'll be at my office at seven. You be there; round up the others; I'll have

enough cash on hand to show anybody that's nervous that a bull market is on the way."

He hung up the receiver with his manacled hands and wheeled around, almost knocking over the kneeling man who labored at his ankles. He spied Herkomer.

"Here, this can wait," he roared. He rose and shuffled into the next room.

"How're you feelin'?" he cried. "Great fight, wasn't it? By gosh, it made me young again! Pshaw, you didn't see it. Tough luck. Been 'phonin' my broker. I'll be on the job in the mornin'. Here, you, get busy with my feet again."

And he sank into a chair and beamed upon the Commissioner as though they were seated pleasantly in a club, chatting together.

HERKOMER beamed in response, though it hurt his head to move a muscle of his face. He felt the bandage across his forehead and sighed as he looked at his likewise-bandaged hand. It would be weeks before he could play tennis again. And he loved tennis.

"What you sighin' for?" chuckled Conybear. "Aint you landed the biggest gang that ever was and covered yourself with glory, and wont the girls make a fuss over a handsome young feller with a wounded hand? You bet! Smile."

But Conybear's words did more than make Herkomer slightly ashamed of his regret over a pastime only temporarily lost; it made him realize clearly all that had happened, or that must have happened.

"Kelcey, sketch in the bare places, will you?"

Kelcey grinned. "Well, there's one guy on the way to the cemetery—at least he will be to-morrow."

"Shot?"

"No." And the good-natured Kelcey's tone was slightly regretful as he made the admission. "Apoplexy. Leastwise, so the doc' says."

He nodded at a bearded man in the background, who bowed acquiescence.

"Yes, but then?"

"Why, then, Commissioner, why, then, you see—"

Herkomer wondered why Kelcey should speak in so singsong a voice. He suddenly realized that he was being picked up and carried. He knew what they had done. They'd given him an injection of some sort to ease him, and now he was going to sleep, and he wished they had let him alone. But wishes rarely alter facts. Herkomer was asleep before his bearers reached the foot of the stairs. But it was a calm, restful sleep, undisturbed by harassing dreams.

CHAPTER XVII

IT was almost noon when Herkomer reached his office the next day. Eight hours of solid sleep, backed up by a wonderful constitution, made him much more fit than his fussy housekeeper was willing to believe. However, despite her dire prognostications and her reiteration of what the doctor had said when he was brought home, Herkomer, after several telephone calls, left the house.

He smiled his way through the reporters, to whom enough had been given last night to delight a sensation-hungry world this morning, but who clamored for more. He promised to talk with them in a couple of hours, and made his way to his office.

It was a good-sized gathering that had assembled there. The Sinsabaughs, man and wife, Philip Waring, Conybear,—whose mere presence had stopped the panic this morning,—a man Conybear chatted with cheerfully and whom he insisted on calling Henderson, and two girls, one extremely pretty, though pale, and the other easily remembered as the "nurse" of last night. There was also the secret-service man from Washington.

Herkomer sat down at his desk. He eyed the group.

"Henderson," he said, "suppose you begin."

"Chesley, if you don't mind, Commissioner," was the easy reply. "Victor Chesley, formerly of the secret service."

"And *presently* of the secret service," amended the man from Washington gruffly.

CHESLEY smiled. "Thanks," he said. He drew a deep breath. He was not the self-effacing man who had been Conybear's secretary-valet for more months than he cared to remember. He was alert, self-confident.

"After I left the secret service, for reasons that my chief"—and he bowed to the man from Washington—"now believes were manufactured, I determined to prove that I was not a scoundrel, untrue to my government. I went go into detail. Suffice it that I was certain that a man named Simon Bergson, a European adventurer of whom I shall not speak too harshly because he is not here to defend himself—I was sure that this man Bergson was responsible for my disgrace. Bergson was then in the business of procuring, for any government that hired him, the secrets, military or naval, of other governments. A secret of this government was stolen. I was accused of selling it. I could not prove that I had not done so.

"No matter. It is all over now. The black cloud—" He gulped, and went ahead again. "One friend in the service I had who trusted me: Peter Randall. But he knew, as well as I, that there is no return to employment in the secret service when one has once been dropped—unless under most exceptional circumstances. Randall thought he saw a way—if I would work and wait.

"He told me facts I verified. A certain group of fanatic had decided that the world was run wrongly. They intended to remedy matters. They had gathered around them hundreds, thousands of followers—some who were frankly out for gain, others who were altruists, though cranks. Those out for gain were paid for their services, and knew little. I joined this society. I became acquainted with Bergson, who did not know me, and who, I soon learned, was to handle the American end of this society's plans for the readjustment of the world.

"I met Bergson in Paris, where Randall was located. Randall had obtained two years' leave of absence in which to ferret out this menace to society. Randall vouched for me. It was easy, for Randall was high in the society's councils.

"I came to this country with Bergson. I proposed that I affiliate myself somehow with Burton Conybear. By forging recommendations I managed to gain entrance to his employ. The rest was easy, only—I did not know the society's plans. Indeed, it was only after Mr. Conybear's kidnaping that I realized that Bergson was playing his own associates false, that he was not working for the imagined good of humanity, but was a schemer, working to enrich his own pockets. I thought that the kidnaping of Conybear was but the beginning. I looked for infinitely bigger things, and delayed action in the hope of landing the bigger game. I did not believe, nor did Randall, that Bergson was more than a minor figure in the great game. We believed that there were giants above him."

"WHAT was the great game?" demanded Herkomer.

"Well, some hundred millions of dollars was Bergson's great game," replied Chesley. "The game of those above him was the demonetization of all currency. They hoped, by rendering currency valueless, to equalize all distribution of the fruits of this earth."

"But how were they going to demonetize currency?"

"Suppose that every bond in the world, every share of stock, were offered for sale—at once? There could not possibly be currency enough to meet a fraction of these demands. Bonds and stocks would be worth practically nothing in the market. True, money—gold—would be at a premium. But that would not help matters. The fact that gold would be more valuable would not make two gold dollars out of one gold dollar. And there is not gold enough in all the world to meet the obligations that exist, obligations that are bound to be paid in gold. The world—so these fanatics hoped—would see that the whole financial system was built on sand, that it was a house of cards. The only true values would be property and labor. The medium of exchange, money, would be dispensed with. Property and labor would be the mediums of exchange."

"Back to the days of barter and exchange. All civilization set back. Absurd!" said Herkomer.

"Fanatics are rarely logicians," smiled Chesley. "Anyway, that was the plan. And it was to be worked out by capturing the leading financiers of the world and forcing them to sell their securities, creating panic."

"This much I gleaned. But I wanted to know definitely, to capture the fanatics when their guilt was established. And the only way I could learn anything was by being one of them. I spied upon Conybear, that I might be able to give Bergson definite, valuable information. I hired for him two gunmen who, I assured him, wouldn't stop at anything for the proper reward. They wouldn't, either, but before they ever committed any violence I hoped to have them behind the bars, to be able to use them as witnesses. Unfortunately, in the excess of delight at the rich haul of yesterday, they drank too much—at least, I assume so. They were killed. But you know about their automobile accident."

"I placed a dictaphone in Conybear's study; I assisted in his kidnaping. All this, that I might gather evidence—and then, at the end, to learn that Bergson had played his fanatic friends false, that, although he was a fanatic himself, he was a cunning fanatic, a greedy fanatic, with no idea of helping the world, but obsessed with the idea that he could get away with untold millions."

"HE did, up to a point," snapped Conybear. "Why didn't you ever tip me off to what you really were?"

"How did I know how many of your servants were spies upon me?" countered Chesley. "For instance—your chauffeur. After you were kidnaped and I learned that my message had reached the police I decided to go to New York and see the Commissioner. Matters had gone far enough. But I dared not use the telephone. And a careless word told me that the chauffeur who drove me was in the plot. Had I gone to Headquarters—well, I didn't. I wasn't afraid for myself—I think I've proved that,—but I feared that if anything happened to me—well, Burton

Conybear might never live to enjoy his millions."

"Humph!" grunted Conybear.

"But the note? This note?" asked Herkomer, showing the creased water-proofed paper that Peter Perkins had brought to him.

"I didn't dare telephone. I didn't dare say anything definite. I could write nothing. I was followed. I was watched. I ran across a clam-digger. He was in terror of prosecution for trespassing. I had a piece of paper on which I had once got Mr. Conybear to write his name. He had thought that he was signing a document, but he wasn't."

"If you weren't what you are, but were what I thought you were, you'd be a fine one at it," grunted Conybear, not so cryptically but that he was understood.

Chesley laughed. He resumed. "I imitated Mr. Conybear's handwriting in the lines above his own signature and told the man to take it to the Commissioner of Police of New York."

"But why didn't you say something definite in it?" demanded Herkomer.

"Suppose one of the other members of the plot had seen me give the note to Perkins? No, not that, for then the fat *would* have been in the fire. But suppose that some other person had stopped the man before he left the grounds and had seen the note. If there'd been anything definite in it, the reader would have known who wrote it, despite the false handwriting. All I could do was this: give the police a tip on which they would act so as to prevent panic in the stock-market."

"But when you reached New York? Why not telephone then? When I spoke to you asking about Mr. Conybear?" demanded Herkomer.

"The telephone at Portsmouth has other receivers. How did I know who was listening-in? And as for when I reached New York—I punctured the gasoline tank myself, so that it drained dry. But I feared that the chauffeur might telephone New York on what train I was coming. . . . You see, Bergson had grown jealous of me. He thought I aspired to greater power than himself. Further, he thought me hon-

est, and that interfered with his own plans—or might. The slightest excuse—"

"But when I telephoned you," cried Waring. "Why lead me into their clutches?"

"And who are you?" asked Chesley. "An idle, rich young man, aren't you? Why should I consider your safety when I was risking the life of the biggest financier in the world? Further, I feared that premature disclosure to the police of Conybear's whereabouts would result—as I told you at the time over the telephone—with personal risk to him.

"Can't you see?" he asked them all. "I was after big game. I did not realize that personal greed had made Bergson drop the society's aims, that the capture of Conybear and a few of his closest intimates was all that was wanted. And when I did realize it—well, I was a prisoner, as you found me, last night, locked in a room in that private 'hospital.' Bergson's jealousy had been too much for him—and us!"

THE man from Washington nodded. "Chesley did everything for the best. If a whole world were menaced,—and he thought it was, and he can't be blamed for thinking so,—beyond doing what he could to prevent immediate panic, he could not look out for other people—not even Mr. Conybear. He wanted evidence. Thanks to Bergson's treachery to his own associates, no evidence is needed. Not on this side of the Atlantic, for the plot has failed here. Abroad—well, this morning's cables say that Randall is O. K., and the French police inform me that what Chesley thought was planned here was really planned there. The others, most of them, were honest, though fanatics. Bergson wasn't."

"He was as honest as your big financiers, like Mr. Conybear," cried the woman who had tried to bar Herkomer's entrance to Bergson's stronghold last night. "He took by force what Mr. Conybear takes by trickery."

The man from Washington eyed her. "With your permission, Herkomer, I've promised this young woman her freedom if she'll talk. She had nothing to

do with the three murders; we have all the rest of Bergson's gang locked up. We have plenty of evidence. This woman really has done nothing save be cognizant of Bergson's plans. It would clear the atmosphere—"

Herkomer nodded. Prosecution of a woman never appealed to him. He was glad of some excuse to let her go.

"It matters not to me," exclaimed the woman. "My Simon is dead; you beasts have killed him."

"He died of apoplexy," said Chesley mildly.

She sneered. "A quibble. But—one plays, one wins, one loses. What does it matter how he went? It is the end—for me too. As for your jails—they matter little. When the heart is dead, the body cares not where it is."

Softness had crept into her face, but now it hardened again. She looked at Chesley.

"You are right. My Simon was no milk-and-water fool, thinking to save a world. He was a man! It needed a man to win me, for I have not been unsought—and sought by younger men. But they were pygmies compared to him. You call him a fanatic. Maybe. So was Napoleon, then! He lost. And so has my Simon lost. But when one plays for a stake like that—Mr. Burton Conybear did not think him a fanatic but yesterday—Mr. Burton Conybear, who went to his vaults at my Simon's command and took therefrom over fifty million dollars. He took fifty million dollars that only accident,"—and she glared at Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh,— "only the accident of a silly doll's being curious took away from him.

"Oh, well, you would know about him. It matters not who he really was or how I met him. Suffice it that, garbled by prejudice, the story you have just listened to is true. Simon trusted this Randall you mention—but not too far, not enough to tell him his real plans. Only I knew those. And they were to gain the foremost financial place in the world. He did not intend to skulk into hiding after his grand *coup* had been brought off. No, indeed! He meant to defy Mr. Conybear and his associates. And he could have done so. He would have bought judges, juries—

and I was to reign with him, by his side in his place of power. It was for that that I cultivated you, Mrs. Sinsabaugh. But I—I had no name. So I took the name of this doll here." She sneered at Claire Sorel, who drew slightly nearer Waring, on whose face was written adoration.

"Social position too my Simon wanted—for us both. I had charm, he said, and would grace his house. And so I went to Mrs. Sinsabaugh's, and there I left my Simon's name and telephone-number. And so I killed him—because I was careless, because I loved him so that I loved to look at his name, even, and kiss it, and— He was a man. And that is all."

DOUBTLESS there was more, but she would not tell it. Herkomer felt that she had bought her liberty cheaply, but after all, what did it matter who Bergson had been, now that he was not? He let her go, and the office seemed sweeter for her absence. Still, she had loved Bergson, and that was something in her favor. To be able to love means good of some sort.

"You, Waring," said Herkomer.

Waring told his story. At the mention of Carvajal, the Commissioner started.

"But he was really an aid of Randall's!" he exclaimed.

"But he'd not lost his viciousness through his police connections," said Waring. "I was an enemy always, I imagine."

Herkomer nodded. "And Miss Sorel?"

"Uncle dared trust few," explained the girl. "I suppose that Carvajal had been highly recommended to him, or he would not have trusted him. So he sent me over here. He told me of Mr. Chesley, but not under the name of Henderson. He told me really very little. I was merely to watch, to find out. Also, and it was my real reason for being with Bergson, I was to be a sort of hostage for my uncle's good faith. I knew it, and assumed the risk gladly. I looked for Uncle's aid; but had he come to me, that Carvajal—" She shuddered, and she and Waring drew nearer to each other.

Conybear arose to his feet.

"Wait a bit," said Herkomer.

The financier sat down.

"Your plans—you'd ordered your brokers to sell short all along the line, Mr. Conybear?"

"Well, what of it?"

"Why did you start a panic?"

"Panic, nonsense! I'd given orders, in envelopes to be opened yesterday, for my brokers to sell, simply because I wanted to beat certain prices down. I'd intended giving another crowd of brokers orders to buy as soon as prices began to go down. The whole crowd of us,—those four white-livered dogs that are confined to their homes to-day suffering from shock,—all of us intended to pool together and buy. And we were going to get control of certain transportation-lines that would handle certain products and make the whole thing more efficient. The blasted government wont let us have our companies own railroads, so we intended to own them privately."

"And makes scores of millions," said Chesley.

"You know it," grinned Conybear. "But at the same time we intended to lower costs and benefit the people."

HERKOMER shrugged his shoulders. Crazy fanatics with fantastic plots, and Burton Conybear! Both intending to benefit the world, and some of them, incidentally, to benefit their own purses!

"A fine thing it would be if men didn't risk other people's fortunes and happiness on their own ideas of what the world needs," he said.

Conybear stared at him. "A good philosophy, at that," he grunted. "No more reformers—"

Herkomer laughed. The old financier was incorrigible.

"Still," said the man from Washington, "a jury might find you guilty on the spirit of the law, not its letter."

"Eh?" Conybear stared. He nodded comprehendingly. "A hint from Washington, eh?"

"Oh, no. A private remark from a private individual."

"But with horse-sense behind it. I see. I guess I'll be content," he said.

He bent over and rubbed his ankles. "Took me for a walk, with a revolver-muzzle pressing against my ribs, and then, because I refused—when he had fifty million dollars of mine in the next room—to sign an agreement not to prosecute, and to let him retain my money, he put irons on my feet and hands—a great experience! I shall examine the credentials of my next valet," he announced grimly. "Still," he chuckled, "Bergson knew. I had sense, and he didn't drug me and have me carried to his blasted place in an ambulance. Something in that."

He looked at Chesley. "You're a great man," he said. "If anyone had ever told me that I could look at you without wanting to kill you—if anyone had ever told me that a man who led me as close to my own funeral as you did had put me under an obligation to him—I'd said that person was insane."

"Obligation?"

"Sure! I aint had an experience with gun-men since I was twenty-two, and it's great to learn that I aint lost my pep!"

He cast a grinning glance about the room, and then he left. The office seemed smaller after he had gone. He took with him something of elemental bigness. There was silence, broken after a moment by a question from Claire Sorel.

"My uncle is out of danger?" she asked the man from Washington.

"He is—absolutely," was the reassuring response.

"And will I be needed to testify?" she asked Herkomer.

THE Commissioner shook his head. "Murder and conspiracy to murder—is a charge that will send all the gang to jail. The kidnapping can be dropped. They'll pay enough as it is. And we have ample testimony against the murderers without you." He smiled quizzically. "You and Mr. Waring, although you have been through a lot together, although you were prisoners, although you've both faced the threat of death together—you don't seem to have very much to say to each other."

The gathering had become something like a family party. The intimate remark, that might have been resented at another time, seemed perfectly natural in the reaction that had followed upon explanation. Claire blushed. So did Waring.

"I'll have a whole lot to say to her when we're alone," he said stoutly.

He drew his hand across his forehead, where Durney had struck him when they entered the wrong taxicab. He knew whose hands had bound his head. He knew who had defied Bergson to kill him, who had sworn that if Waring were killed, it would be necessary to kill her also, for she would betray Bergson to the police. He knew who had been able to do all this and yet not let Bergson think that she was anything but a suddenly love-sick girl; he knew who had kept her uncle's part-playing a secret; it had taken brains as well as courage to do that.

"Well, shall we leave you?" asked Herkomer.

"Unchaperoned! Indeed!" said Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh. "She's coming home with me, and then Phil can go through Bergson's papers and find out the quickest way to get back the money Haig gave to Bergson, and then—"

She impulsively kissed the girl, whose face was a crimson glow now.

CHAPTER XVIII

It was after the wedding of Claire Sorel and Philip Waring. The young couple were on their honeymoon. The Carey Haig money had been recovered. Papers found among Bergson's effects had shown that Carey Haig had committed a minor crime in early youth. It had come to the knowledge of Bergson; Haig had done what even stronger men have done, had yielded to blackmail until there was no more to yield save life—honor and fortune having preceded the surrender of life.

And now, with another confirmed bachelor, Malcolm, Herkomer was playing billiards at the club.

"Pretty wedding!" said Malcolm.

"They all are," assented Herkomer. He played a difficult carom—made the point, chalked his cue and eyed the balls. "Poor position," he said. He failed on an easy draw-shot. He sat down.

"Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh's a wonder, isn't she? What do you suppose she demanded of me to-day? Said some of her woman friends were all swelled up because they had licenses to carry revolvers. She wanted something more than that. Wanted a special officer's commission."

"Give it to her?"

"Lord, yes. Give her anything. . . . Pretty toy; too bad— Oh, yes, I gave it to her. Bully good sort, too. I'm to dine there to-morrow night. Wants me to meet a girl that—"

"Oh, gosh!" cried Malcolm.

"What's the matter?"

"Why, you poor fish, you're done. You're hooked, gaffed and landed."

HERKOMER blushed. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, you'll find out. When Mrs. Willy decides a young man is nice and invites him to meet a girl—"

"Rot!" said Herkomer hotly.

"I know Mrs. Willy," said Malcolm.

"She can't make me marry a girl I haven't even met, can she?" demanded Herkomer.

"Of course not. But she can let you," grinned Malcolm.

"Rot!" said Herkomer again.

"Best little matchmaker in the world, and now that Philip Waring has married Miss Sorel, Mrs. Willy must be doing something, you know."

"It won't be me," cried Herkomer emphatically and with no great regard for grammar.

"Make a little bet?"

"Certainly."

"Dinners for six that you're married in a year."

"Done," said Herkomer. "And it's a shame to take the bet."

But he didn't know Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh and the lovely girls that Mrs. Willy knew. Herkomer lost the bet. But he didn't mind. He always said that Mrs. Willy Sinsabaugh was a dear.

THE END

A Single-Track Mind



By
**Charles Wesley
Sanders**

WORMAN had decided to kill Trowbridge. He had not made his decision in a moment of overpowering passion. It was an idea which had crept naked into his brain as he had lain in his bunk the night before. And because it was so cold and deliberate it was the more deadly. Worman was a man whose mind had to be swung by something definite outside itself. The only thing which could swing it away from the notion of killing Trowbridge would be a relenting on Trowbridge's part.

That such a relenting was possible was disproved that very morning. On his way below, Trowbridge had passed Worman. And Worman, ruled by his new purpose, said nothing; he only regarded Trowbridge with a calculating eye. Worman had no time to waste in words now. He had to consider Trowbridge in a new light. Trowbridge of course misunderstood that. He thought Worman was afraid, and he told Worman so then. Worman's heart glowed with a strange happiness, at that.

All day Worman tried to evolve a plan for the murder. He found that difficult. His natural way would have been to get Trowbridge in the dark and

stick a knife into him. But there were two big objections to such a method: first, he wanted the satisfaction of letting Trowbridge know that it was Worman, the despised, who was killing him; second, he intended to pay no penalty himself for so justifiable a thing as killing a man like Trowbridge.

So night came and Worman had no plan. In the dark of the deck at nine o'clock he came upon Trowbridge, smoking an evening pipe. He thought Trowbridge did not notice him, and he kept on his way. But Trowbridge spoke, in that taunting voice of his, without turning his head.

"Come here!"

It was a command of utmost insolence, for Trowbridge had no authority over Worman: Trowbridge was an oiler, Worman a deck-hand. There was no need for speech between them, even. Worman hesitated. Then he approached the rail. Trowbridge stretched out his hand with his pipe in it.

"Fill it," he ordered.

Again Worman hesitated. Trowbridge slowly turned. It was too dark to see the glitter of his jet eyes, but Worman knew the glitter was there. And it was that menacing sign which Worman was most afraid of. To his stolid mind it was a thing which might leap out at him like the fang of a deadly snake. He took the pipe and filled it from his own tobacco-can.

"Light a match," said Trowbridge.

Worman obeyed and held the tiny, flickering flame above Trowbridge's pipe. For an instant the light shone on Trowbridge's face as he bent his head. It was a swarthy, evil face, thin and lined, but confident and defiant. The lips which held the pipe were blue instead of red. The nose was a beak.

The light went out, and the two men stood still while Trowbridge got the pipe to going. As they stood thus in the darkness the men were of types as opposite as types of men can be. Trowbridge's body was in keeping with his face. It was lean and long, with a pantherish strength and grace. When Trowbridge moved, he was a swift, noiseless thing. He trod on the balls of his feet and he held his body forward. All the while those restless eyes moved.

Stolidity marked Worman. He was a massive man, tall, thick-chested, long-armed, sturdy-legged. His face was red, his eyes very light blue and set deep in wrinkled pits, his hair a thick, matted mass of straw. He was ponderous in his movements. He was a mountain and Trowbridge was chain-lightning playing about him.

Trowbridge smoked for a moment and then he took his pipe from his mouth. Worman waited tensely. Suddenly Trowbridge spat upon him.

"Go below," said Trowbridge.

Worman stumbled along the deck. Behind him he heard Trowbridge laugh. Many, many times Trowbridge had laughed like that after his gross insults—insults which were mere cruelty, for Worman had never harmed Trowbridge.

"I'll kill him to-night," said Worman to himself as he sat on the edge of his bunk in the dark. "Just as soon as he gets to sleep, I'll kill him."

Thus Trowbridge himself set the time for the deed which Worman had planned.

IN half an hour Worman heard Trowbridge descending the stairs. Worman was lying in his bunk then. He was undressed and pretending to snore. In his right hand he held a long, thin knife.

He waited till he heard Trowbridge

snoring in reality. Then he slid to the edge of his bunk and got slowly to his feet. He had to move more slowly than usual, because he must make no noise, and his huge bulk was hard to manage. He stepped out cautiously. His heart began to pound with fierce anticipation. No more should Trowbridge force him to be his servant and spit upon him. . . .

He was within three feet of Trowbridge's bunk when he halted. From the deck came the sound of running feet. There were raucous cries. A voice detached itself from the rest and came nearer. The door was thrown open and an order given.

Worman ran back to his berth. He had no need to be careful now. Men were piling out of their bunks on all sides of him. Worman was not noticed. He hustled on his clothing. Fully dressed, he paused. Trowbridge was just beginning to dress.

When the last man was gone, leaving himself and Trowbridge there alone, Worman slipped through the door and closed and locked it behind him.

As Worman reached the deck, he saw men going over the sides into the small boats. He realized, even through his thick soles, that the deck was hot to the touch.

He lumbered forward. As he reached a hatch which had been left slightly open, what had been a spiral of smoke became a sudden pillar of flame. Worman could feel its heat along his body. He staggered back, spitting out little burning places in his clothing. A little panic seized him then. He plunged past the hatch and gained the rail. There was not a boat to be seen.

He turned half about, his perplexity making the motion mechanical. Except for the roar from that pillar of flame, there was no sound on the freighter. Nor was there any life, except that a rat scurried now and then. Worman began to take off his clothing.

HE was down to his trousers and shirt when a voice sounded back of him. Worman came about. Trowbridge was standing within two feet

of him. Worman staggered back. His old fear of Trowbridge asserted itself.

The fear grew as he stared at Trowbridge. If Trowbridge had been menacing before, he was a devil now. He too had on only his shirt and trousers. His face was twisted with passion. Worman noted how the cords stood out in his neck and how his pulse beat in his throat.

"Thought you'd lock me in, did you, you poor fool!" Trowbridge panted. "Thought you'd murder me! . . . I'm goin' to kill you and throw your body into that burning hold."

He flashed his lithe body on Worman's giant frame. His attack was so abrupt that Worman yielded to it and went to the rail. Then Trowbridge's long fingers, even stronger in a grip than Worman's, found Worman's throat. Worman's windpipe collapsed under the pressure. The fire's glare grew dim in the big man's eyes. He felt himself slipping along the rail.

Then the fighting blood of centuries of common men asserted itself. Worman raised himself, and his arms came about Trowbridge's body. One hand crept upward till it came to Trowbridge's face. Trowbridge bit the hand, but Worman's great muscles tightened and Trowbridge's hold on the throat was broken. Worman stood a moment gasping. Then he raised Trowbridge in his mighty arms and slammed him down on the deck. Trowbridge grunted, wriggled and got to his knees. But Worman, the slow, was merely a fighting man now. He had only the battle-instinct. He even for the moment forgot the peril of the burning boat. He reached down, took Trowbridge by the shoulders and raised him to his feet. He struck him again and again and once more cast him to the deck. Trowbridge lay still, his face to the sky.

With a grunt of satisfaction Worman climbed to the rail. The ship was all on fire now. The deck was dropping through in many places. Soon the fire would be leaping skyward from stem to stern.

Poised there, Worman attempted to stare through the darkness, but he could see nothing beyond the zone of

light which the boat's fire made. But he could not wait. The peril of the fire was greater than that of the water. He prepared to leap. Before he did so he turned for one last look at the man who had tortured him.

Trowbridge lay on his back. He was motionless; his eyes were closed; his face had taken on a greenish hue—there were bruises all over it. To Worman's nostrils came the odor of clothing beginning to scorch.

Hate died from the big man's heart; he became himself. And since he was himself, there was but one thing he could do. His was the creed of all brave men: to give his own life, if necessary, to save that of another. Because he had no complexities in his nature, and because his hate was now satisfied, the instinct to save became his strongest impulse. He leaped from the rail to the deck.

IN half an hour Worman had put Trowbridge's body down on a barren Lake Erie shore. He knelt beside Trowbridge and felt for his heart. He could find no beat. He fastened his eyes on Trowbridge's dim face.

He had a sense of desolation. The far, star-crowded sky, the black water, the stretch of sandy shore—these seemed to mock him. They seemed to tell him he was alone with the death he had made.

He wished to take his eyes from Trowbridge's dark, bruised face, but it held him. And suddenly it struck terror to his soul. This was what he had planned to do to Trowbridge—to torture him, to maim him, and then to kill him.

"Gawd," he whispered, "I was out of my head! I'll carry this thing with me all the rest of my days."

He had no thought of flight. He was not a criminal, to seek his own safety. He was a simple man goaded beyond his powers of endurance. He was now trying hard to decide what was the most just thing to do for what was left of Trowbridge.

But he could get nowhere. Trowbridge was dead. That was what confused him by running through his mind. . . .

And then Trowbridge stirred. Worman gave a cry that echoed across the sands, and started vigorously to rub Trowbridge's chest. Trowbridge sighed once or twice, and then his chest rose and fell slowly in painful inspirations.

Worman fell upon him like a wild man and rubbed and pulled at him in a wholly unscientific way. After a while Trowbridge struggled back to life—a dazed life, but life nevertheless. Worman sat beside him and waited.

"Water!" Trowbridge whispered.

Worman ran to the edge of the beach and scooped up water in his great red hands. It trickled away between his fingers as he sped back to Trowbridge, but there was enough to give Trowbridge several generous mouthfuls. Then he sat up.

"You tried to murder me," Trowbridge breathed. "I'll make you pay for it. You big brute you, to attack a man like that!"

Worman was at once so penitent and so glad that Trowbridge was alive that he did not heed the injustice of the accusation.

"You've maimed me," Trowbridge went on. "You've hurt me so I'm partly paralyzed. Part of me is dead. . . . What're you going to do about it?"

"I'll look after you," Worman said. "I'll take care of you all the rest of your life if you don't get well. Honest to Gawd, I will, Trowbridge."

"Why didn't you leave me on the boat?" Trowbridge asked.

"I was afraid," Worman answered, his psychology not being able to advance him beyond that in explanation of his emotion.

"Sure, you were afraid," Trowbridge agreed. "You're a coward, and everybody knows it. I could have licked you on the boat if you hadn't got in a lucky punch. I'll make you pay for this."

"I expect you can't walk," Worman said.

"Of course I can't," Trowbridge answered. "I can't hardly move."

"I'll carry you," Worman said. "We'll find a farmhouse up here somewhere, and I'll get you a doctor."

He stooped and gathered the injured man up in his arms. Trowbridge was

not heavy, and Worman was powerful beyond most men.

TWO hours later Worman staggered up to the door of a farmhouse. A gray-haired woman came in answer to his call. She unlatched the screen and bade Worman enter.

"Bring him right in here," she said.

Worman was desperately weary, so that he was grateful to her that she asked no questions. She led the way into a cool, darkened room. Worman, fresh from the light of the very early summer morning, stood peering about him.

"Here's a couch," the woman said.

Worman put his burden down. Then he straightened up with a sigh of relief. His muscles ached. He wished he too might lie down. But he had to take care of Trowbridge from now on.

"Is there a doctor around here?" he asked.

"Just over to the Corners," the woman answered. "And we have a 'phone. Shall I call him?"

"Yes'm—please."

The woman hastened from the room. Worman sank into a chair which had outlined itself to him as his eyes had become accustomed to the gloom.

"Yes'm—please."

Worman started out of a half stupor. Trowbridge's insolent laughter was running through the quiet room. It was the same laughter as Worman had formerly hated. And he supposed Trowbridge's eyes were glittering as they had formerly glittered.

"You know how I used to worry you," Trowbridge said. "Well, let me tell you that that won't be a circumstance to the way I'll be able to worry you from now on. You'll be scared to call your soul your own. You never did have much spirit. What little you did have is busted complete. And you know it. I aint afraid of anything. I'll fix you, my boy."

Worman knew that was true. He had had his glimpse of death, and he wanted no more of it. He was again the mountain, and Trowbridge was the lightning-flash.

The doctor came in half an hour. As he entered the room and raised the

shade, Worman tiptoed out. He went into the yard and sat down on a bench. There his fears renewed themselves. Suppose he had made a cripple of Trowbridge for life. That would be almost worse than if he had killed him. A crippled man had no chance at all in the world in which he and Trowbridge lived. And so his mind ran wild on its single track.

HIS meditations were interrupted by the opening of the screen door. Worman looked up. He was surprised to see the doctor emerging. He rose.

"Is he going to croak?" he asked.

The doctor gave him a curious glance.

"You couldn't kill him with an ax," he answered.

Worman sank back on the bench. It did not strike him as strange that injuries which Trowbridge had proclaimed as terrible were regarded by the doctor as trifling. He could not see that Trowbridge, whatever his motive, was making capital of his injuries. He only knew that his heart was filled with thanksgiving that he had neither maimed nor slain.

"The man wants to see you," the woman's voice said behind him.

He rose quickly and entered the house. In the room to which he had borne Trowbridge the latter was now lying on the couch, propped up with white pillows. The sweet morning air filled the room.

Trowbridge fixed his eyes on Worman's and held them. Those eyes which Worman dreaded seemed not to glitter now, but to sparkle as if some gay, mad humor had come to fill Trowbridge's mind.

"Well, old pal," Trowbridge said, "I'm here to give you your marching orders." Worman stared dumbly. "I been asking the woman. She says we're only five miles from Jetson Harbor. It's a fine place; I been there. They got some of the nicest little iron-ore docks ever I see. You go over and get a job. Save your dough. I'll be over in a week or so. Be ready to look after me."

"I'll go," Worman said.

As he was opening the screen door, the woman stopped him.

"You must eat before you go," she said.

On the bench outside he ate bread and meat and drank coffee. Then he set off down the country road. The morning was cool, and there were the signs and sounds of summer on every side. Worman filled his great lungs and was glad. What a different man he would have been if he had killed Trowbridge! Instead of being glad like this, he would have been a shadow in a world of happy people. He would never get mad at any man again, so long as he lived.

He was dusty but not tired when he entered Jetson Harbor's ore-marked environs. Now again he had but one idea—to get a job on the docks. He had to have work, for he and Trowbridge would need money. He supposed Trowbridge would need quite a good deal of money.

AFTER Worman had got the job, he found a boarding-house on a little street which climbed a hill from the dark river. He was just in time for dinner, and after he had washed in the gloomy little room to which the landlady took him, he went downstairs.

He stood a moment in the doorway of the dining-room. On his way through the village he had bought a new blue shirt. He still wore the trousers he had donned on the boat. They had dried as he had carried Trowbridge to the farmhouse, and they were clean. He had carefully wiped the dust from his canvas-top shoes. Above that new shirt was a face for a painter. It was hewn out with rough, free strokes from Nature's chisel. The skin was coarse-grained, but it was a fit covering for such a face. The abundant yellow hair was carefully combed. The blue eyes were mild. Worman looked just then as if he were a man come back for a moment from another time—a man of the ancient North who had trod many a deck.

And so he looked to the girl who came through the doorway, bearing a tray filled with dishes. She gave him a glance, set down her tray and turned and stared at him.

She was a girl of perhaps twenty-four. She was a big girl, large of bone, broad and tall. Her hair was dark, and her eyes were a very dark gray. Her features were built on the same generous plan as her body—wide, full mouth, large nose, broad forehead and spreading cheeks.

And these two—this man who had bound himself to a ruffian and this woman who was forced to serve the roughest of men—stood and stared into each other's eyes. She recovered herself first. Her lips parted over large, white teeth.

"You're the first," she said. "Come right in and set down. The gang will be here any minute now."

She put her hand on the back of the chair which she wished him to take. Worman advanced to the chair awkwardly. He put his own hand on the back of it, and their fingers touched. The man was conscious of a new thrill of life. He had known women, but not this woman. He sat down, and she withdrew her hand.

"You're going to work on the docks?" she asked.

"Yes'm," he said in a voice curiously low for so huge a man.

There was a moment of silence, because she, standing behind him, was staring at him anew, and because he could find nothing further to say. She was unused to being answered politely.

"Been here before?"

"No'm."

She advanced to his side. He looked up, and again their eyes met.

"It's a rough gang," she said. "It's a hard-drinking, cursing, devil-may-care gang. . . . You don't drink, do you?"

"Oh, no'm."

She had wished to know that the moment she had seen him, because she had grown heart-weary of serving only those who reviled. She sighed, in relief apparently, and half turned away. Worman turned his head so that he should lose nothing of her. She still looked down, sidewise.

Worman was awakening. A woman, a stranger a moment ago, had stirred him as he had not been stirred before by anything. Through a sort of mind-

haze which had bound him came one bright, permanent idea: he did not want to lose this woman.

"You here right along?" he asked.

"Sure."

His great chest shot out with the force of the breath he took.

"I want to see you sometimes."

She did not bridle or smirk. The look in her eyes only deepened. They were both swayed by something vital.

"All right," she said. "Any time. . . . Look out. Here comes the gang."

THEY came trooping in—men from across the seven seas. They paid no attention to Worman at first. They fell upon their food and devoured it noisily. Worman was conscious of a feeling of dislike for them. It was shameful that this girl should have to serve them. He wondered if they ever bothered her. If they did—And then fear, even the fear of Trowbridge, died in Worman's heart. A man molded to be fearless had at last won to his birthright.

Since he did not work till next day, he lingered till the last man had gone. The girl came to his side again.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Anna? That's good. . . . You meet me to-night at the top of the hill, and we'll go for a walk."

And then for the first time she blushed when she smiled.

"All right," she said.

They walked that night far out into the country beneath the summer stars. She kept up with him tirelessly, though she could not match his long stride, and he could not accommodate his to hers. They came at length to a log fallen among giant trees at the roadside. They sat down and were silent. . . . After a while he reached for her hand, and she yielded it without question.

"You'll marry me?" he asked.

"I will," she answered.

Worman had no notion how long they sat with their arms about each other. He was quiescent, too happy to be otherwise. She could do no less than marvel that a man like this had come into a world in which she had had to be on her guard.

And then suddenly Worman thought of Trowbridge. He started and drew himself up. She straightened up too, and waited for him to speak. She was not alarmed.

"There's something I got to tell you," he said.

And he told her the story of Trowbridge.

"I aint afraid of him no more," he said. "I could break him with my little finger, but I did have a hunch to kill him. I would 'a' done it if the fire hadn't started that night. And then I locked him in. . . . I got to take care of him till he gets well. It'll take money, an' I aint got only what I'm earnin' on the docks. So you see we're up against it."

She astonished him by laughing; and then she boldly put her arms about his neck and drew down his head and kissed him. At that he snatched her up to him in a transport.

"It don't make no difference," she said. "We can stand it to take care of him for a while. We can wait. I got a little money saved up."

"An' you'll keep it," he said proudly.

"Well, it don't make no difference," she reiterated.

They walked back slowly. When they came to the top of the hill, they separated. She went down it, and he stood at the top. Presently she was lost to his view. He hurried after her, hoping he might get one glimpse of her as she turned into the boarding-house. As he rounded the corner he nearly collided with another man. The other man fell back.

"WELL," said Trowbridge, "where you been? I been lookin' for you. I couldn't stand the country. I'm dry. Gimme a buck."

"I aint got it," Worman said. "I got credit, though. I'll fix you at the bar."

"You better," said Trowbridge.

Worman stopped. Trowbridge, in his haste for a drink, was three steps ahead of him before he realized that he was moving on alone. He whirled.

"Why—" he began, and then he stopped.

There was something new in the

giant's face—something strong, alight. Puzzled, Trowbridge did not speak. Worman moved on.

"I owe you your keep till you get on your feet," he said. "But I aint afraid any more."

Trowbridge did not believe him. He scented a bluff. He thought Worman was "holding something out on him." Well, he wanted a few drinks now. The puzzle could wait.

They went into the barroom, and Trowbridge drank three drinks of whisky, one after the other. Worman stood by, saying nothing. The score was charged against Worman.

"Now," said Worman, "there's something I want to show you."

He piloted Trowbridge down a long, dark hall and opened the door of a back sitting-room. The girl was sitting there, a lamp at her elbow, placidly sewing. Worman gave Trowbridge one glimpse. Then he closed the door. He heard Trowbridge take his breath sharply.

"She's a pippin," Trowbridge said.

He reached out quickly for the door-knob. Worman caught his hand and flung it back. Trowbridge laughed, a short, ugly laugh.

"So that's how it is," said he. "Let's go back to the bar."

"I'm goin' to bed," Worman said.

He began to climb the stairs, and Trowbridge went back to the barroom. Worman stood on the landing till his footsteps had passed beyond hearing in the passageway.

"He's in love," Trowbridge chuckled over his drink. "That's why he aint scared. By Gawd, he can't get two ideas in his nut to once. I'll fix that love-hunch of his."

TROWBRIDGE started to "fix" it the next afternoon. Half-drunk, he had eaten his dinner with the men from the docks. He had sat down the table from Worman, and he had not looked at him, but in the depths of his eyes was the devil's glow.

The men left, Worman among them. Still Trowbridge sat there. While the girl cleared away the dishes, he rolled and smoked a cigarette. His lids were half lifted now, so that the glow in his

eyes shone out a little. The girl took the dishes from before him. They were the last on the table.

Then she stood the length of the room from him. Trowbridge advanced upon her. He did not know it, but she had purposely waited for him. From where she stood she could see into the barroom. A Finn, an undersized but rugged, fearless man, stood at the bar, drinking. He was one of her admirers.

Trowbridge stopped before the girl and put a hand on the table. His eyes were wide open now, and they drank in her beauty. Her gray eyes met his black ones without flinching.

"You're Worman's girl," he said. "He tol' me. You pretty fool!" She did not speak. "What d'ye want to tie up to a clam like him for?" he demanded. "Don't you know he's so thick in the head he don't hardly know his own name? An' I got him buffaloed: he's my property; he does what I tell him to do. I can spit on him if I want to. I done it many a time. He aint a man. He's a hand-lickin' dog."

The girl's living passion sprang into her breast. Her bosom rose and fell against the gusts of it.

"An' you're a snake," she said. "He's feedin' you—givin' you a livin'—an' you talk about him like that. He's good to you, an' you stab him in the back."

"Good to me?" Trowbridge said. "Why, he don't need to be good to me, an' he knows it. I tried to kill him on the boat, an' he thinks he tried to kill me. He don't owe me nothin'. He's afraid."

"Ah!"

The girl's exclamation was triumphant. She faced the man with shining, love-lighted eyes.

"That's what I wanted to know," she cried. "He thinks he owes you somethin', an' now you say he don't. So that makes you even. . . . You think he's a fool, but that's only because you can't see how good he is. He's a man. He's so good that he tries to pay what he thinks he owes a thing like you. Afraid! Why, if I'd tell him to, he'd kill you."

"Pretty!" His voice was soft. He seemed not to have heard her taunts.

His eyes devoured the strong beauty of her. "What do I care about him now, sence I seen you? Huh?"

With one of his lithe movements he suddenly slipped an arm about her waist and threw the other across her shoulders. He tried to draw her to him. . . . Then her scream rang through the room.

IT was answered on the instant by the sound of a glass clattering down and then by a man springing across the barroom floor in long leaps. The Finn stood in the doorway of the dining-room. He took in the situation at a glance. A long knife gleamed in his hand. He bore down on Trowbridge. The girl thrust Trowbridge behind her with a strength which astonished him.

"No, no!" the girl cried, barring the avenger's way. "Go back! It's all right now."

The man stopped, glaring from red eyes.

"Leave him alone," the girl commanded. "Go back!"

He withdrew sullenly. The girl walked calmly to the doorway. Trowbridge looked at her once, and then he went out by the street-door.

The girl smiled to herself. She knew she had rid her lover of his burden, and her lover would not be responsible for what happened. Among the men who would congregate in the barroom that Saturday, not one but worshiped at her shrine. The sullen Finn would pass the word swiftly, and the whirlwind would be loosed.

At seven o'clock that night she sat in the dining-room, waiting. She did not sew. Her hands were idle in her lap. Her head was slightly bent as she listened. Expectancy showed in her eyes.

From the barroom came the usual Saturday-night sounds: glasses clinked; there was loud talk, laughter. The odor of rough tobacco, smoked in old pipes, came to the girl. . . . Suddenly there was silence.

During that silence Worman appeared in the doorway of the dining-room. He had said he was going to the village to buy clothing. The girl sprang up.

"Why—" she began.

And then there was a loud oath from the barroom. Another oath answered it. There was the sound of a blow. And then that whirlwind which the girl had expected broke.

Worman stood with lifted head from the beginning of it. His face hardened. The girl saw his chest rise slowly. Then he turned and ran to the barroom door. The girl followed him. In there Trowbridge was the center of a group of a dozen men—Slavs mostly, hard men who had often seen blood flow. They were shuffling Trowbridge about among them as wolves might pull and haul at a living prey. And Trowbridge was fighting back with all his strength.

The girl put her hand on Worman's arm.

"Let them be," she whispered. "He tried to kiss me, this afternoon."

FOR answer, Worman leaped. His big body reached the edge of the struggling mass. He threw a man back, and the man brought up against the bar with a grunt. Then Worman fought his way through the liquor-maddened, jealous men. He pulled them back, cast them aside, and one or two he felled with single blows. At last he and Trowbridge were face to face. Trowbridge was bleeding at mouth and nose.

Worman regarded him for a moment, and then he turned to the gang. They were recovering, but their minds were not made up as to what they should do.

"Leave him alone," Worman said in a low, thick voice. "He's mine. He's my man. I'll brain the first one of ye lays hands on him."

He turned back to Trowbridge. Trowbridge looked up at him. Trowbridge perceived that Worman hardly seemed to see him. He was looking beyond him.

"I saved your life," Worman said. "You can go if you want to. I ought

to kill you now. This is the time I ought to kill you. The other time wasn't the time. But I'll let you go. You aint worth me dirtying my hands on. But if ye stay,—stay anywheres near where she is,—why, then I'll kill ye."

Trowbridge wavered, swaying forward on the balls of his feet, the fires of hell in his eyes. Hate was there, and jealousy and the desire to slay—to tear this man to pieces. But he could not do it unless Worman was afraid.

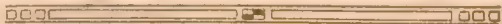
He scanned Worman's face, greedily hopeful of a sign of weakness. But there was no sign. Over that lifted face there had come only a look of serenity—a look so alien to anything which Trowbridge had any knowledge of that it awed him and gave him pause. Worman, the single-minded, had got another idea, but it was an idea which seemed to be illumined from within, so that it stood out as clearly to Worman as if it were some object which he gazed upon.

And even as Trowbridge stared at him, Worman's eyes dropped to Trowbridge's own. Trowbridge quailed before that glance. It seemed to read him like a printed page. It seemed to enable Worman to understand that Trowbridge at heart was a coward—that all the fear which Worman had ever had of him was a thing which he might crumble to pieces in one of his big hands.

"Well?"

Worman's voice was still low. And with its controlled tones in his ears Trowbridge turned and got to the door. There he faced about, but even in his last moment he was unable to put any malevolence into the look he hurled upon Worman.

As the door closed upon him, Worman turned also. He walked to the doorway among the men whom he had laid violent hands upon. There he put his arm across the girl's shoulders and led her away from them.



Free Lances in Diplomacy



Behind the Secret Panel

by
Clarence Herbert New

ALL Petrograd was seething over the Zhasputin assassination, for none doubted that the intriguing monk had been treacherously done to death, and the half-dozen people who knew how it had accidentally come about, were keeping that information to themselves for perfectly obvious reasons. After the first rumors, there was a general disinclination to believe that the well-hated power behind the throne was really dead. His killing had been unsuccessfully attempted upon more than one occasion, with disastrous results for the would-be executioners. But in the course of a few hours General Lipowski's police had chopped a fresh hole in the Neva ice, lowered a diver through it and recovered a body that was unquestionably Gregory Zhasputin's.

Then came the evidence implicating young Prince Yussupoff, who had recently married into the Imperial fam-

ily. It was said the monk had been lured inside the grounds of his palace on the Petrovski and shot to death there—the body afterward being taken down to the Neva. The shots were accounted for in a plausible manner, and the evidence was merely circumstantial, at best; but Prince Yussupoff left the city for his estates in the Crimea. Before he returned, it was announced by the Ministry that certain criminal cases would have to be dropped, from military necessity, owing to their strictly political nature.

On the surface, the Zhasputin affair was closed. The monk was dead; it was apparently impossible to discover his assassins. In the political undercurrents of the Russian capital, however, the matter was destined to arouse deadly suspicion among several groups of conspirators and as time went on, to develop intrigue within intrigue until the infamous Green Circle was shaken to its outermost periphery.

This influence began to develop in the beautiful Tudor palace of the Princess Xenia Tarazine, on the Kamennoi Ostrow, within a few hours after Zhasputin's body had been recovered from under the ice. Among her house-guests was a supposed Irish-American capital-

ist and potential German conspirator, the Honorable Aloysius McMurtagh—who really was Earl Trevor of Dyvnaht, a famous British peer in the diplomatic service. He had been one of the party with Prince Yussupoff and an English lady, also of Downing Street, to kidnap Zhasputin, and had told Princess Xenia the circumstances of the unforeseen shooting when he returned to her palace at three in the morning—after which he had slept very soundly until eleven.

He had breakfasted alone with her, in her private suite, in order that she might be given sufficient information to prevent the young Prince's arrest. With the exception of the Prince's three servants and the English countess referred to, they were the only people in Petrograd who knew of the original plan to shave Zhasputin and have him sent to the Siberian mines—who knew that he had been really shot by the Countess Wirdovski, after he had brutally knocked her down. But five of the other house-guests happened to be members of the Green Circle—with which the Princess herself had been affiliated until the previous evening—and had heard her thank Prince Yussupoff for driving the monk out of her palace, after a most revolting dance which he had performed.

Hence, when the fact of his death had been established, they began comparing notes. They hinted, guardedly, to a few others—who casually happened in after dinner, that evening. McMurtagh nobody appeared to connect with the affair at all. He had but recently arrived from America, was known to be conferring with Green Circle leaders upon an Irish uprising timed to follow a German *coup d'état* in Petrograd and was not supposed to have had any interest in the monk, one way or another. Prince Yussupoff was, at the moment, on the train to join his Imperial wife in the Crimea, a fact which the Princess Xenia carelessly mentioned as though all must be aware of it.

FOR an hour after dinner, the conversation in the great hall of the palace, where everyone had gone to smoke, was confined to general topics. But after

the few loyal Russian callers had taken their leave, the talk became more explosive. Hints and thinly veiled accusations went back and forth like *ripostes* in a fencing-match. It was Grand Duke Feodor who presently became more personal in his insinuations.

"This is the worst blow our organization has yet received! We could have better spared anyone rather than Zhasputin! The man had his faults and was a moujik, as everyone knows—but he was the only one who could always influence the Emperor against any particular statesman in public office. Every time the Progressives—curse them—have managed to seat a premier or foreign secretary, Zhasputin has unseated him by working upon His Majesty's weak points, and we've nobody left for that sort of work! We'll know, sooner or later, who were responsible for his shooting—and I promise you they'll follow him without delay! Aye, even if the evidence points to some who are here at this moment, regardless of sex!"

The Princess Xenia lighted a cigarette and blew a little smoke toward the Grand Duke with unmistakable insolence. He was an unbidden guest that evening—never a welcome one.

"Meaning me—Feodor Feodorovitch?"

"Meaning anyone implicated in that murder—even thou, Xenia Tarazine!"

"Hmph! Almost, I am persuaded to say I did it! I'm really curious to know what you'd do—how you'd go about it—and how many minutes you'd live—afterward. My servants wouldn't hesitate about killing you, even if some of my guests did! It was hinted to me, this morning, that the fellow was killed unintentionally—during an attempt to exile him to Siberia. Had that been carried out, I should have most heartily approved. He was getting to be an unbearable offense in Petrograd—too much of a one to be received in any decent house.

"And I'll confess that I'm disgusted with the whole of this German intrigue. There are nations in the world, to-day, which are doing unbelievable things—committing crimes that would make a Cossack tremble with fear of the

hereafter! There can be no possible advantage to the nobility of Russia in associating with them. I'm conscious of burning shame for having associated with them—and though I've no intention of denouncing others among us who have been equally to blame in this matter, I wish it distinctly understood that I have no further interest in the Green Circle or its objects!"

There was a sinister murmur from three of the men present; the Grand Duke's face slowly darkened.

"So! You would defy the Green Circle and expect to live! You would stand aside—refuse to assist, either with your fortune or your personal influence! Others have died for less—much less—considering what you might betray if the whim seized you!"

"If the whim seizes me, Feodor Feodorovitch, rest assured that I shall say what I wish to say, concerning anyone; and neither thou nor others in the Circle will remove me one moment before my allotted time. What is written—will be! Your Highness, I wrote out a list of several hundred names, this morning, with an accompanying statement, and placed it, sealed, beyond your reach. It is supposed to be a codicil to my will. Within an hour after my death or disappearance is reported, it will be opened and read by men whose loyalty to Russia has been tested a hundred times. I am a noble, of Tartar blood, and I do not betray my order unless it threatens the existence or welfare of my country. You will be wise if you do not proceed to extremes which bring that conviction home to me. What I don't know, I can't judge. But don't forget that list in the hands of my executors! Who knows what names, or what proofs of treason, may be found in that document if I should disappear suddenly?"

The Grand Duke was almost beside himself, but upon his forehead and those of the others beads of perspiration began to gather.

"Curse you, Xenia! I believe you shot Zhasputin yourself!"

THE HONORABLE ALOYSIUS had been an interested listener in one corner, but the talk appeared to be

reaching a point where anything might happen if the strain increased. Lighting a cigar, he interrupted with a good-natured drawl:

"If your organization has a secret service, as one infers it must have, I fancy you're rather badly served by it—because I stumbled upon a few bits of information, yesterday, which convinced me that your scoundrelly monk was selling you out. If you are good judges of character, you must have seen that the fellow was fairly insane in his desire for power. And knowing that fact, it would occur to an onlooker like myself that he stood to gain a lot more from the Czar and the Russian government than from Germany. When this war is over, Russia will continue to exist as she did before. She may be more powerful,—or less,—but I fancy even the Kaiser hardly expects to control her in any way, unless he's an utter fool. Your monk expected to remain here in the Russian court, of course. Well, he had more to sell the Czar than he had to sell your organization—and stood to gain far more by it."

It was apparent that some, if not all of the men, didn't relish this suggestion or such interference upon the part of a mere visitor in Russia—an outsider, even though he might be a prospective fellow-conspirator. They listened with ill-concealed impatience and disbelief.

"It is easy, Sir American, to accuse a dead man of treachery!"

"Yes, you were sure to say that, of course. But, one moment! Last evening I was passing a house in the old quarter of the city—the sort of place which might be occupied by a tradesman in good circumstances and which becomes a lodging-house as the neighborhood deteriorates. Zhasputin came out of that house in a sneaking sort of way that made me step back for a better look at the place. In about three minutes General Serge Lipowski—who, I understand, is the responsible man behind the Russian police—came out in much the same manner and went off in the opposite direction.

"This morning I was introduced to a young officer who supposed me unquestionably on the side of the Entente. He was so full of a rumor he'd heard that

he couldn't help repeating it to us—a rumor that Lipowski had discovered a plot to cut the trusses of a long Volga railway-bridge with oxy-acetylene, and send half a dozen supply-trains racing down to it from those munition-factories along the river, in response to a hurry-up telegram from the front. Of course, the first train would smash through into the river, but everyone along that section of the line is in the plot and no warning will be sent back to the following trains.

"The cavalry captain who told us the story said the information came to Lipowski from one of the most prominent men in the reactionary party—a man probably connected with the mysterious Green Circle—and that preparations have been made not only to repair the bridge before those trains are sent over it, but to arrest over a hundred people implicated in the plot.

"Now, I'm an outsider, as you say—not entirely in your confidence as yet. But I've heard enough to know the destruction of those munition-trains was planned in just about that way; and I suggest that General Ossipovitch, who I understand has succeeded Count Gazonoff in handling the transportation system, make himself noticeably active in getting those particular trains to the Roumanian armies in the shortest possible time. If any of you see him to-night, you'd best tell him what I've said. Lipowski won't dare arrest those hundred people under suspicion without more tangible evidence than he yet has. Lie low on this munition-train proposition awhile; then perfect some other plan.

McMURTAGH'S manner was quiet but convincing. They began to think he might prove a valuable addition to the Green Circle, after all. Here was a man who kept himself alert in a city which was strange to him—where he had but a rudimentary knowledge of the language. He had spoken in French, that his choice of words might not lead to any possible misunderstanding—and the circumstantial evidence which had come under his observation seemed to leave no doubt that his charge of treachery against the dead monk had pretty solid foundation.

That the man whom they'd considered their strongest influence in the web of German intrigue at Petrograd should have proved a traitor who had been eliminated none too soon—possibly by some of their own associates—was startling enough to at least eight of the party in the big Gothic hall. But the more they considered this Irish-American's story, the more they came to realize that further treachery might be stalking at their very elbows.

In the silence which followed McMurtagh's remarks, they noticed that one of their number was looking fixedly at the Honorable Aloysius in a peculiar manner. The Baroness Sophie Mourakoff had been for six years one of the reigning beauties of Petrograd and Moscow. Descending from an old Slav family, she was considered thoroughly Russian in spite of, several German intermarriages—which made her the more valuable to the chiefs of the Green Circle and more dangerous to the Russian government. With the manner and appearance of an ingénue, she was equipped with a maturely subtle intellect which grasped the motive behind human actions in a rather uncanny way—it was the sort of prescient understanding one never looks for in a débutante. There was now, in the question she asked McMurtagh, a suggestion of dread possibilities which held the attention of everyone.

"At what time last evening, m'sieur, did you see Zhasputin coming out of that mysterious old house?"

Trevor felt a creepy sensation along the flesh between his shoulders, but replied without the slightest hesitation:

"Possibly half after six. I was on my way to dine with friends at the Donon, on the Moika."

"You're quite sure you saw the monk himself, at that hour—in the old quarter of the city?"

"Positive, Baroness. I had a close view of his face in the light from an arc-lamp at the corner."

"Then would you mind telling us how he happened to be acting as the chauffeur of a landaulet in front of the French embassy at eleven o'clock last night, when you came out from the ball with a lady and drove away in it?"

AGAIN Earl Trevor was conscious of the creepy sensation along his spine. It was one thing for the Princess Xenia to defy the dreaded Green Circle and take measures to protect herself from assassination by members of her own order; she knew the game, the risks and difficulties in making away with a woman of her position and vast wealth. But for a British peer, masquerading as an Irish-American for the purpose of defeating *coups* planned by the German intrigue in Petrograd, there was no possible immunity, once his real purpose was suspected. Trevor had been in hundreds of tight places within the previous ten years, but he realized, as he sat there surrounded by all the evidences of wealth and ultra-civilization, in one of Russia's most famous palaces, that his life had never been in greater danger. Yet as always in moments of greatest risk, his manner was never more genially self-possessed. His assumption that there could be no possible reason for suspecting him of any questionable proceeding was convincing; he seemed to be surrounded by an aura of genuineness and puzzled bewilderment as he answered her question.

"I fancy you can't possibly be right in that statement, Baroness—though I'll admit I didn't look at the chauffeur when I stepped into that landaulet. Now I think of it, my companion made some remark about her own man being called away that evening by the death of a relative and sending another chauffeur to fill his place temporarily. But even so, what possible object could that infernal monk have in such masquerading? Why, the doctors say he must have been shot before that hour! We were driven straight from the French embassy to my friend's residence; the car was put in the garage on the premises.

"Those facts are too easily verified to be disputed. And even though I didn't get a square look at the chauffeur, I'm quite positive I should have recognized Zhasputin from his massive shoulders and his unusual hair. The man certainly was in this house long enough to have recognized me anywhere; what object could he have had

in spying upon a person in my position, escorting to her home a lady well known in this city? If you'll pardon my putting it that way, the supposition is too absurd to consider for a moment! If the man had injured me in any way, I fancy I'd have had no hesitation in shooting him; but his relations with your organization were none of my affair. I never saw him outside of this house except upon the occasion I've mentioned."

"And who was the lady, m'sieur?"

McMurtagh's laughing retort brought a smile to every face in the group—for a moment.

"Er—possibly a relative of the gentleman with whom you were sleighing on the Neva, two nights ago, Baroness! Of course, I can't be positive upon that point unless you care to enlighten us. But—returning to more serious matters, if you permit me—I think from an outsider's viewpoint, it might be well for your organization to do a little investigating from the inside before attempting to go ahead with any of your definite plans.

"Here is the position which Major Brady and I occupy. We came to you with credentials from Major Lupokovitch of the London embassy—expecting to work out a plan whereby we might coöperate with you by starting something in Ireland simultaneously with a *coup* in Petrograd. We have funds enough to do a good deal; we could go further if you cared to assist us financially—that part of it is entirely up to you. We had blocked out a good working plan with Count Gazonoff just before his sudden death—which appears to have left things rather up in the air. Just now, it seems to me that we can do nothing but mark time until your organization is more certain of carrying out its plans without betrayal and disaster. Once we start anything in Ireland, we must go through with it—or hang."

The young Baroness had been thoughtfully studying McMurtagh's face as he spoke. Unless her knowledge of human character was more faulty than she believed, the man was as genuine as he seemed. And what he said was well worth earnest consideration.

LATER in the evening the Honorable Aloysius was passing through the long Tudor gallery on the way to his own second-floor suite—rather close to the oak wainscoting of the solid wall that formed the side opposite the windows—when every light in the sconces was suddenly extinguished. The moon had not yet risen, and so the darkness was impenetrable. As he stood wondering if something could have happened to the palace dynamo in the cellar, there was a slight click in the wainscoting—a faint draft of air—and a small but firm hand grasped his arm. He caught a barely audible whisper, close to his ear:

"Step this way—very quietly. Now lift your foot about eight inches—don't stumble over this baseboard."

As he was being led along a narrow passage in pitchy darkness, there was a faint click behind them. The panel closed in the wainscoting, presenting an appearance of solidity that would have deceived anyone examining it from the gallery side—particularly as it was backed with four inches of oak and would have given back no hollow sound if rapped upon.

The lights in the gallery sconces flashed up again just as the young Baroness opened a door at the farther end. Having noticed McMurtagh going in that direction a moment before, she glanced along the gallery expecting to see him—but decided that he must have passed through rather briskly to his own suite, which happened to be in the same wing as her own, though his windows were upon the opposite side, where she had no glimpse of them.

Meanwhile the Honorable Aloysius had been led around several turns in the narrow passage—evidently constructed within one of the thicker walls—until a warmer and faintly perfumed atmosphere told him they had stepped into a room. As he stood in the middle of it, listening intently for the footsteps of his mysterious guide, three incandescents flashed up in a table-lamp by his side—and he saw that he was in a private study of the Princess Xenia's. Through an open door one dimly made out a bath, with a dressing-room beyond it. Around the walls were solidly filled

bookshelves; between the windows stood a Flemish high-boy used as a writing-desk, and by the table at his side was a broad divan covered with a magnificent tiger-skin. The Princess had seated herself upon this,—motioning to a near-by chair,—but he coolly sat down by her side and took one of her hands in his own. The color flamed into her face as she made a slight attempt to withdraw it.

"*Mon ami*—you seem to forget that one of my rank is inviolate—not to be touched!"

TREVOR smiled at this.

"And you evidently haven't learned that, to a man of any democratic country, a princess is merely such a woman as his sister or his wife—her only sacredness being the fact that she is a woman. Respect for empty rank seems too ridiculous for consideration. Suppose we forget it—and go into your object in bringing me here. You know better than I whether it's safe to mention political affairs in this room."

"The walls are sound-proof—every approach to it is guarded by electric appliances. I was particular about the construction of this place, and my architect was a Frenchman who died two years ago—he brought his own force of workmen."

She was looking at him curiously, with scarcely concealed wonder and admiration. "Do you know, *mon ami*, just where Zhasputin really was at half after six, last evening?"

"Oh, I'm not quite stupid enough to risk my life upon the sort of lie which a dozen people may expose at any moment! At six that monk was in the house I described to the Grand Duke and the rest of them—disguising himself in the uniform of a Russian admiral. Fully half of that great beard he buttoned inside the collar of his uniform coat; that big mane of his was turned up and covered with a wig of shorter hair. I'd suspected he might threaten you for reasons of his own, and followed him for two hours—saw him drive up to your porte-cochère in a stylish limousine and send in his admiral's card, asking for an immediate interview. Your servants, pre-

sumably, didn't recognize the fellow at all. You were already in the secret of our plan to exile him that night—so had little fear of his threats. But I went back and met him near that house when he came out dressed as the Countess' chauffeur. He must have had a rather complete wardrobe of disguises there—all of which are probably in General Lipowski's possession by this time. If any of the Green Circle were in the habit of meeting him at that old house, they're pretty sure to avoid it after what I said this evening. It was my description of the place which made the statements appear only the literal truth—some of them must have known the place."

"M'sieur, if you were really conscious of your deadly personal danger in the hall, this evening, you are the bravest man I have ever known! Now, who—and what—are you?"

"I don't think I quite understand?"

"Oh, yes, you do, *mon ami*! You understand perfectly! I thought at the time that the assistance you offered us in getting rid of that moujik was rather surprising—considering your affiliation with the Green Circle and your coming to Petrograd for the express purpose of coöperating with it. It was natural enough for any gentleman to be disgusted with Zhasputin, to put him in his proper place; but you went a great deal further than that. To-night you've gone all the way, and your life wouldn't be worth a copper kopeck if the Green Circle knew what I know about you! Stop a bit! I remember that you came to me with a card from the Earl of Dyvnaint, the famous Lord Trevor! Is it by any chance possible that you are a member of the English secret service—in Downing Street? That would account for everything!"

AT this the Earl looked deeply hurt. "Do I appear to be the political *mouchard*, Your Highness?" he asked.

"*Au contraire*, you have the manner of the nobility. And one knows the diplomatic service is an honorable profession which includes men of title in every country."

"But I am an American—nobility isn't one of our national institutions."

"Possibly you were born in America—but you're not an American of the present day! That is certain!"

"What do you mean by that? What's your idea of an American?"

"A hybrid—a mixture of European dregs with a farming and tradesman class which has forgotten the principles of liberty—equality, justice and humanity upon which the United States were originally founded!"

"There are a few of the old breed still living in America, Your Highness—and they may yet wipe the stains from our good old flag. Give us a little more time. Meanwhile, let us return to your immediate purpose with me. The evidence in your possession appears to indicate that I may be working against the Green Circle instead of with it. Well, it's a simple matter to eliminate my activities; the merest hint from you will be sufficient. I may be dead within the hour—always provided you are right in your surmise concerning me!"

"M'sieur, by what you said this evening, you did more to disorganize the immediate work of the Green Circle than all the efforts of Serge Lipowski's police! You planted suspicion in the very heart of the organization; there's not a member in Petrograd at this moment who is above the suspicions of his fellow-members; it is certain that the Grand Duke has been spreading your insinuations in the clubs since he left here! It was the sort of weapon Machiavelli used with deadly effect. Now comes the question as to whether we can further block the efforts of the Green Circle—without losing our lives too soon."

"Then Your Highness is really determined to work against that crowd? As a loyal Russian, I really don't see how you can do anything else; but without their coöperation our Irish uprising is quite impossible, you know! Major Brady and I need them in our business!"

"Enough, my friend! You've no more interest in Ireland than I. You need fear no betrayal from me—even if you refuse my assistance. It seems to me, however, that it might prove valuable, in various ways."

"For example: Could you invite

General Ossipovitch to be your guest for the week-end—arriving to-morrow evening in time for dinner? I mean—make sure of his being here—and have the Grand Duke in the house at the same time? I'm well aware of your detestation for the man."

"Why—that should be managed, if I go about it indirectly. Though I don't quite see—"

"I was told in London that the active chiefs of the Green Circle were Count Boris Gazonoff, who died the other day, just after we'd had a secret conference with him; General Ivan Ossipovitch, who has taken over the army transportation since Gazonoff's death; and Baron Stellanowski, who has so many deputies of the Duma in his power, one way and another, that he almost controls it. When the Count died, it upset their plans a good deal. You say I've been fortunate enough to do a little more in that direction. If the suspicions of other Circle members can be definitely focused upon General Ossipovitch, you can imagine what may happen to him and how much his elimination will increase the muddle. That would leave only Stellanowski, of the leaders; probably something may occur to us in regard to him as we go along. But—if you permit me to warn Your Highness—you will be playing with death at every step, and you have far more to lose than I. Better consider before you decide."

THERE was a winning kindness about the man which influenced her strongly, and an impression of latent force. Who or what he really was she couldn't decide, but that he was far more of a personage than he chose to appear seemed unquestionable. In her level, straightforward glance, there was an expression which told him that he might have taken her in his arms and kissed her without rebuke—but glancing over her shoulder at that moment, it seemed to him that one of the panels in the dark oak wainscoting had become warped by the heat of the room until it had sprung back half an inch from its surrounding moldings.

A quick comparison of the adjoining panels showed no such effect in any of

them; he saw that it must be the secret door by which she had brought him into the room. But he distinctly remembered the click of a spring-lock behind them when she was turning on the lights. If, by sheer mischance, some one had discovered the secret of the panel in the gallery, had crept along that passage to overhear what they were saying? With a finger upon his lips, he stealthily circled the wall until, without making a sound, he stood beside the panel. Suddenly placing his hand flat upon it, he gave a powerful shove inward. There was a sound of some one falling backward upon the floor of the passage. Before the man could struggle up, Trevor was upon him—wrenching a knife from one hand and dragging a revolver from his pocket. Then—with a strength which his appearance failed to indicate—he thrust the spy into the room, handed the revolver to the Princess, that she might cover him, and searched the passage for possible companions.

WHEN the Baroness Mourakoff went through the long gallery on the way to her rooms, she met Count Stefan Grünwald standing behind the portière at the farther end, and asked him if he had just seen McMurtagh—which he apparently had not. Count Stefan was also of the Green Circle—but unlike many of his Russian associates, was influenced by a personal animus which made him push its work in deadly earnest. His father, a Berliner, had been a resident of Petrograd for many years, having married a Russian lady of his own rank and possessed of large estates which necessitated their residence in Russia to look after them. But he had been educated at Prussian universities and had always fraternized with his German relatives more than with those of his mother's family.

He had opened the door at the end of the gallery just as the lights went out, and had an indistinct impression of seeing a man's figure near the wainscoting a second before. When the current was turned on again, he saw the Baroness coming along the gallery—but the man was nowhere in sight. He certainly had not passed him—and her

inquiry revealed his identity. Grünwald had been one of those who were most suspicious of the Honorable Aloysius during the talk in the big hall; and in spite of that gentleman's plausibility Grünwald had not been entirely satisfied. Walking slowly along by the wainscoting, he stopped at the spot where he had seen McMurtagh standing.

Grünwald was slow-witted—but painstaking and relentless, once he started upon the track of anything; so he began by trying to imagine where he would have concealed the spring if he had been a carpenter, constructing a secret door. His first guess was somewhere under the molding of the base-board—but his fingers ran along it for several feet without finding anything. He tried the upper molding, with the same result. Then he fell to studying the carved foliage upon the panels themselves. It was close to one in the morning; nobody happened to come through the gallery. Suddenly one of the panels swung inward before him, without his knowing just what he had touched to release the spring. With a quick glance to be sure he was unobserved, he stepped through—gently closing the panel behind him.

WHEN Trevor had satisfied himself that the fellow had no accomplice hidden in the passage, he returned to Xenia's study, where she was lounging on the divan, the revolver upon her knee, covering the Count, who sat composedly in a near-by chair. The supposed Irish-American quietly dropped into his former place on the divan—by the Princess. But for the blue-black revolver, one might have supposed them in the midst of a friendly chat—but there was a tenseness in the atmosphere which made the Count vaguely uneasy. Of course, it was ridiculous to suppose for a moment they would do him bodily harm—when he explained how mere curiosity had led him to investigate the secret panel and see where the passage led to! The Green Circle was too dangerous an organization to antagonize; his standing in it was too well known to the other members. As the seconds ticked away with the silence still

unbroken, a chill gradually took possession of him. It was impossible that anything serious could happen, but—Suddenly, he broke out in a voluble explanation of just how he happened to explore the passage.

"Of course, Your Highness will understand I am most discreet—always! One has one's own little affairs, under the rose. I thought that passage must have been constructed when this old palace was built—before Your Highness purchased it. Was not even aware that you knew of it. Idle curiosity—romantic sort of contrivance, you know—that sort of thing! Most indiscreet of me—oh, I grant you that! Offer a thousand apologies! Will consider that I dreamed all this—and forget it."

Trevor's low voice cut into his halting explanations like a knife through paper:

"Count, you and I are on opposite sides—enemies to the death. We are neither of us in the trenches—because what we do affects thousands where the man on the firing-line accounts for but a score or two. And for that reason we neither give nor expect quarter. If we let you go, it means death to the Princess, death to me, calamity for Russia and reverses for the Entente—no matter what promises you may give us. You wish us to believe that you heard nothing of what we said in this room—hmph! A man would take his medicine without trying to lie out of it, the facts being so clearly against him. Well, we must get this over with! It's after one in the morning."

Grünwald's heart skipped a few beats as Trevor went on: "I have in my pocket two cigars of excellent flavor. One of them is practically certain death to the man who smokes it—particularly if his heart is a bit weak. They are identical in appearance. I will lay them on the table here, and we'll turn our backs while Her Highness shifts their relative positions a few times. Then we'll each light one and smoke it. If I die, I don't think you've nerve enough to harm the Princess—with that list of names in the hands of her executors. In fact, it's a hundred to one against the Circle's permitting

you to do so. Now—Your Highness—if you will oblige?"

EVERY particle of color had left her face, but her hand was fairly steady as she altered the position of the cigars while their backs were turned. As the Count took one, he was ghastly—trembling so violently that he could scarcely cut the tip from the cigar he had chosen. Trevor held the match for him to light it—and Xenia noticed that there was not the slightest vibration in the flame. He was even smiling as he struck another for his own cigar.

"I suppose one gets a more immediately fatal effect of the drug in this tobacco if it is smoked quite rapidly. But a man dies but once—I prefer to analyze my sensations. So I shall try to prolong them until I feel myself going."

A minute passed in absolute silence—two—five! Whether from sheer terror at the prospect of relentlessly approaching death, or from the nerve-paralysis of unusually strong tobacco, Count Stefan's breathing had grown

more laborious; he was gasping, as he struggled to smoke the cigar down and have it over with. It was gruesome for any onlooker—but the Princess sat there as if carved in marble, her eyes never leaving Trevor's face. The other's suffering she didn't even notice.

Finally, with a little choking exclamation, Grünwald dropped his cigar and began tearing at his collar. Before he could rip it loose, he staggered to his feet and tried to reach the window—pitching headlong on the floor before he had covered half the distance. There were a few convulsive shivers; then he lay there motionless. In a moment or two Earl Trevor knelt beside him and unbuttoned his waistcoat; there was no beating of the heart. Taking a hand-

mirror from the Flemish high-boy, he held it over the man's lips for two or three minutes—there was no sign of moisture. He got upon his feet, shoved both hands deep into his trousers pockets and went back to stand reflectively before the Princess.

"I'm wondering what would have happened if it had been I." (Her lips trembled for the first time—the beautiful eyes filled.)

"Thank God it was not! I should have killed him—and then myself, I think! This is the first time I ever saw a man look death in the face—and smile! I love you for that, *mon ami!*"

Placing her hands gently upon his shoulders, she raised her lips to his.

"CHAMPIONS"

DONN BYRNE, one of the most brilliant of America's younger writers, will contribute an especially fine story to the June BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. "Champions" is the story of a fight—of a great and glorious battle that you will never forget. Be sure to read it—in our next issue, on sale May 1st.

WITH his arm about her, Trevor looked down reflectively at the dead man.

"Xenia," he said, "that was the strangest experiment in psychology I ever saw! I have in my possession a few cigars which are deadly—but the drug in them has the peculiar effect of first act-

ing like an overdose of liquor, loosening a man's tongue until he fairly shouts every innermost secret he has. With the reaction, one slips into coma—and death. But these two cigars were only pure Havana maduros, worth two roubles each—about the strongest made. You notice I smoked but little more than an inch of mine; yet I can feel it in every nerve. Now, three nights ago, my attention was attracted to the brilliant red spot in the center of the Count's cheeks. I saw he was a heavy eater of rich food, and that he drank a good deal of wine with it. I noticed the amount and appearance of his flesh—also the condition of his nerves. Put the man in the trenches, and he'd possibly fight like a cornered

rat—in a frenzy of fear. With death at his elbow in a less violent form, he proved the yellow coward he really was. The man simply couldn't be allowed to live. With what he overheard in that passage, he was a menace to the whole Entente. But it goes against the grain to kill even a coward in cold blood—so I figured his weak heart would settle him just as effectively from sheer fright."

"You—you would have smoked that cigar of his—clear through—if he had happened to choose yours?"

"Of course! I was bound in honor to smoke as long as he did, even though it would have made my nerves jumpy for two or three days. And if there was anything the matter with my heart, it might have carried me off, I dare say. Hmph! Wonder what we'd best do with him? Fancy the safest plan is to carry the body through that passage and lay it down in the long gallery, as if he had fallen there from a sudden attack of heart disease. Hm! If one could be sure that some one of the Green Circle would find the body before your servants, I'd put a paper in one of his pockets that would arouse still more suspicion throughout the organization!"

As it happened, the body was found by a croupy of the Grand Duke's—coming up to bed from the billiard-room at half-past two in the morning. Very much worried over the possibility of being implicated in a murder, he aroused the other members of the Circle and fetched them into the gallery before touching the body. Finding no wound or evidence of violent death, they carried it along to the Count's own room, where they searched his pockets after sending his valet to 'phone for a physician. A letter which they found among his other papers, with the ink less than a day old, caused the assassination of two men prominent in the Council of the Empire, a week later. As for Grünwald's sudden taking-off, the doctors pronounced it unquestionably a case of heart-disease. After the Baroness mentioned his acting queerly when she met him in the gallery on the previous night, there was never a suspicion connecting anyone with the case.

THAT afternoon Earl Trevor, in whom nobody would have recognized the Honorable Aloysius, motored from the British Embassy, where he was staying, to the house of the Countess Wirdovski in time for afternoon-tea. Before leaving, a conference was managed with General Serge Lipowski, the dreaded power behind the Russian police, who also had dropped in to pay his respects. As it was advisable that Lipowski's call upon the Countess—an English widow, secretly in the service of Downing Street—should be a brief one, the Earl got down to business without loss of time.

"General, is the Grand Duke Feodor familiar with your handwriting? Sufficiently to recognize it if only initialed by way of signature?"

"Hmph! He *should* recognize it—he's had occasional I-O-U's for my losses at the club! If that is a requisite in some plan your Downing Street men are trying to put through, you're in luck, because I'm obliged to be exceedingly careful that my handwriting is not too well known in Petrograd! What's up? My secret police report that the reactionaries in both the Council and the Duma appear to be quarreling among themselves—rather bitterly. Do you know anything about it?"

"Well, it wont surprise me if you are busy over the killing of some rather prominent men before long. Our agents are doing what they can—and seem to be having more luck than we dared hope when we came from England. However, they may be wiped out in the very act of scoring an important *coup*."

"Let us hope not! Russia owes you gentlemen a pretty heavy debt, already—which goes to show that outsiders sometimes accomplish what we find impossible from our intimate relations with the people here. Now, what about this writing of mine?"

His Lordship handed Lipowski a memorandum which the General read in a puzzled way:

Concerning the Siberian munition-trains, you will proceed with the arrangements originally contemplated. Your agents will shunt the trains at the junctions agreed upon and proceed

as if nothing had been changed. If this is done, my men can make no mistake when they act. We will see that the shunted trains contain nothing but scrap-iron or sand in barrels, and that the needed supplies get to the front over other lines. S. L.

"I infer that you want me to write this upon a half-sheet of note-paper—as if it had been torn from the first part of a letter; but I don't quite see what good it is going to do your men—"

"Suppose that scrap is dropped from the pocket of some one very prominent in the Army Transportation Department (I'll carefully heat it to age the ink) and is picked up by the Grand Duke?"

"You mean— Great heaven! Is Feodor Feodorovitch conspiring against his own country?"

"Just for a basis of argument, suppose he is—and picks up that scrap—eh?"

"My friend, I thought we'd borrowed a few hints in obliquity from the Orientals, but I'm really not in your class! Here—let me sit down and write this out! Saints preserve us! Where's the sense in arresting and executing people when you can make them kill each other? I'll give you fifty thousand roubles if you'll tell me how to be sure enough of my facts to attempt this sort of thing with any certainty of success!"

THAT evening General Ivan Ossipovitch arrived with his valet at the Tarazine palace in time for dinner. With the Princess Xenia, Baroness Mourakoff and the Honorable Aloysius, he afterward motored in to see the Russian Ballet at the Théâtre Marie—the Grand Duke Feodor joining them before the end of the performance and returning with the party to the palace on the Kamennoi Ostrow. There was the usual midnight supper, with an adjournment to the great hall of the palace for cigarettes and tea. General

Ossipovitch had been carrying on a lively conversation with the Baroness Sophie in the dining-room—and continued it in the big hall. Just as the Honorable Aloysius passed behind their divan to pour another cup of tea from the samovar, Xenia called to the General—who struggled to his feet and waddled over to her. On the divan where he had been sitting, lay a crumpled scrap of paper. Picking it up, the Baroness was evidently thinking of returning it to Ossipovitch, when McMurtagh sat down by her with the cup of steaming tea.

"Love letters? Baroness! Baroness! It's myself that's sad, the night! Will you be telling me the name of the lucky man, till I call him out?"

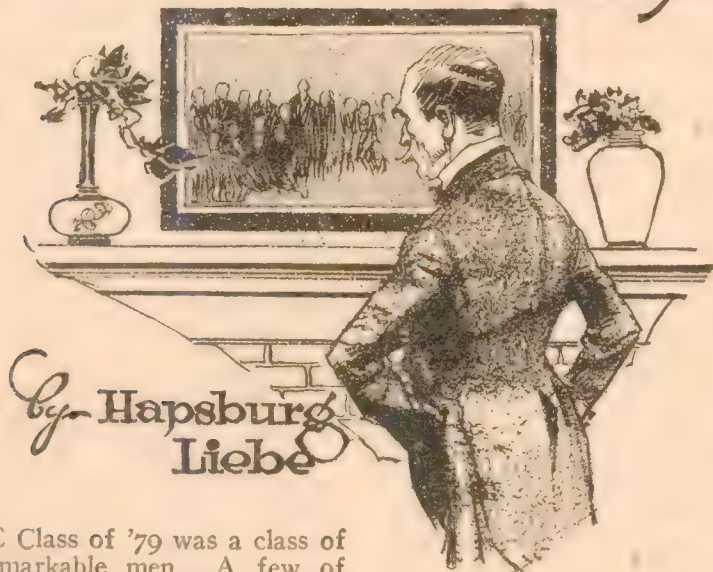
Somehow it seemed to her that there was a meaning look in the Irish-American's face—a subtle warning against what she was about to do. As she refused the tea, he laughingly went over to join the Grand Duke—making some remark in a low tone before passing on. In a moment Feodor sauntered over and sat down by the Baroness—who, in spite of her repugnance to that sort of thing, had stolen a look at the scrap of paper. Presently she handed it to him—behind her fan—explaining that it must have dropped out of Ossipovitch's pocket.

Three nights later General Ossipovitch was fatally shot by two unknown men who had somehow disposed of his chauffeur while his car was waiting outside the house of a lady upon whom he was calling.

Next day General Lipowski learned through his secret channels that the Honorable Aloysius McMurtagh—whom he knew as a brilliant secret service agent from Downing Street—had become exceedingly popular with the reactionaries and the pro-German party—a man whose growing influence was most surprising in a mere transient visitor. And Lipowski chuckled.

There will be another of Clarence Herbert New's fascinating "Free Lances in Diplomacy" in the next — the June — issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. This will be on the news-stands May 1st.

The Class of Seventy-nine



THE Class of '79 was a class of remarkable men. A few of them were famous men. But there were only five of them left now: John L. Bolton was the president of a railroad; Richard W. Armbrust was at the head of a steamship company; Parham C. Ridgeford was a dealer in stocks and bonds; Charles K. Matthews owned a part of Brooklyn; Barrington Lyle, Southerner, who lived in Memphis, wrote to his four Northern classmates regularly on stationery that bore a coat-of-arms in blue and gold. Barrington Lyle was a tall, lean, straight, very gray patrician. The other four were big, broad men and as much alike as the fingers of one of your hands, and they too were very gray; and they were rated at somewhere in the neighborhood of a million each.

John L. Bolton was worried. His physician had told him only the day before that he must take care of his heart. Somehow he was beginning to feel old. He had always been so strong; he had always enjoyed so much his battle of life; he could hardly bear the thought of leaving it all.

John L. Bolton telephoned to Richard W. Armbrust, Parham C. Ridgeford and Charles K. Matthews and asked them to meet him that evening at the Sphinx Club, to discuss a matter of some importance.

And that evening at the Sphinx Club John L. Bolton swept the faces of the other three with his keen gray eyes and said in his deliberate, businesslike way:

"Boys, what d'ye think of a reunion of the Class of '79—a banquet, y'know, and a long talk over the good old irresponsible days?"

"Fine idea," answered the other three in one voice. Ridgeford continued: "My home is at your disposal."

"And so is mine," said Bolton, Armbrust and Matthews.

It was finally decided that the banquet should take place at one of the big hotels. The date was set for the tenth of March, just ten days ahead. John L. Bolton sent a telegram notifying their absent classmate and urging him to be present.

Four days later there came a letter from Barrington Lyle, The Maples, St. George Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee.

Barrington Lyle was very ill, so ill, indeed, that he could barely manage to write the letter. He was grateful for the invitation—only heaven knew how grateful he was! But it was utterly impossible for him to come, of course, under the existing circumstances. He deeply regretted to tell them, but—well, there was no chance whatever for his

recovery. And would dear old Jack kindly remember him to the other three boys, dear old Pat and dear old Chass and dear old Dick? And would they touch their glasses, just once, and say "Here's to Barry?"

The handwriting became almost illegible. The signature was a mere scrawl. To John L. Bolton, man of iron that he was, there was something indescribably pitiful about it. He turned his strong, heavy face toward a window and stared at nothing for a long time.

Then he called Richard W. Armbrust, Parham C. Ridgeford and Charles K. Matthews by telephone and summoned them to his private office for a conference.

The three came immediately. At a wave of Bolton's hand they dropped into chairs. The railroad president produced Barrington Lyle's letter and read it aloud.

"Now, I beg leave to suggest, gentlemen," he growled when he had finished reading the epistle, "that we hold our reunion at the Maples, on St. George Avenue, in Memphis, with old Barry. Pretty soon there'll be—damned if it doesn't make me feel weak, boys—pretty soon there'll be only four of the Class of '79 left!"

"And after that it wont be long until there'll be but three of us left; and not long after that there'll be but two—it gets after me, too, Jack!" Charles K. Matthews looked straight into John L. Bolton's eyes. "Jack, I wouldn't swear if I were you. You're getting too old to swear."

"I wont," promised John L. Bolton, seriously. "It's useless and foolish. But—poor Barry! Fine fellow, wasn't he? How proud he was, and how Southern, and what a gentleman! Blue-blooded, every ounce of him! There'll be plenty of room for us in his fine old down South home, the Maples, of course. We'll go?"

"We'll go," the other three responded heartily.

The railroad president brought his fist down on the heavy oaken desk at his side. "What's the need of waiting until the tenth of March? Suppose we start to-morrow, without letting Barry

know—suppose we surprise him. Eh? Can you get away to-morrow?"

They told him they could if they *had* to. Whereupon John L. Bolton told them they *had* to—which ended the conference.

THE first month of spring came to the Southland like a lamb that year. The sun was the sun of June, and the breezes were warm and laden with sweet odors. Birds were singing in the trees; butterflies with brightly colored wings haunted the flowers of the wild yellow jessamine; the buds of the peach, the plum and the cherry trees were bursting into fragrant bloom—while Jack Frost, the villain, laughed in his sleeve and gloated over the harvest he was soon to reap with his icy breath!

About the middle of a fine, bright morning the four New Yorkers, silk-hatted and otherwise faultlessly attired, stepped from John L. Bolton's private car to the station platform at Memphis. They entered an automobile and ordered the driver to take them to the Maples, on St. George Avenue—did the driver know the place?

"Everybody in Memphis"—the driver smiled and accepted a real Havana—"knows the Maples!"

The machine whirled away. The four passengers began to talk like four boys on a lark, although with an underlying tone of sadness. How they were going to surprise Barry! They wondered if he would recognize them immediately. It had been—let's see, it had been fifteen years since he had come to New York to pay them a visit. They were ashamed of themselves for not having been down to see him—they had not had the time to spare; they had been so very busy. But Barry always understood, always forgave.

The car came to a halt before a fine old residence that had been built in antebellum days; its lines were square and massive; it was of dull-red brick, and all the woodwork was painted white. In the spacious grounds about it stood gnarled maples, stately magnolias, lilacs, altheas, weigelas and jessamines. The four men from the North alighted, and one of them paid

the driver; then they walked briskly up the broad gravel path that led to the steps of the veranda. At the door Parham C. Ridgford rang the bell.

A MOMENT later the door opened and a very old negro in livery appeared before them. He bowed low and told them that Colonel Lattismaine was suffering from a terrible headache and could not see them.

They did not wish to see Colonel Lattismaine: they wished to see Mr. Barrington Lyle.

"Aint no Massa Lyle lives heah, gemmen." And the old black fellow bowed again.

"Isn't this the Maples, on St. George Avenue?" Charles K. Matthews ran the fingers of one hand through his almost white hair and frowned heavily.

"Hit sholy is, sah,"—readily. He went on: "You see, sah, Massa Lyle he jes' gits his mail heah. He lives in a room down at Riveh Street. Massa Lyle, sah, he's jes' po' folks!"

At that instant Colonel Lattismaine appeared. He had been listening. The aged servant saw him and shuffled away. The Colonel came on to the door.

"I take it," he said, "that you, gentlemen, are Barrington Lyle's classmates."

"We are, sir," replied John L. Bolton. "We expected to find Barrington Lyle here, since this has been his address for ten years. We—er—came down to surprise him."

The Colonel pulled thoughtfully at his imperial. "I regret that I am forced to tell it," he declared. "Isham has already let the cat out. Gentlemen, Barrington Lyle is, as he styles himself, a complete and utter failure. He used this address on his letters, and the coat-of-arms of his family, of which he is the only one left alive, to keep you from suspecting that he alone of the notable Class of '79 was a nobody! You will find him abed in his room at twelve-three River Street. He lives there alone; he has never married. His funds are entirely exhausted, and he is dependent upon a few old friends—and, gentlemen, it is mighty hard to give him anything! It would be an act

of kindness if you would not let him know that you know. I tell you, a prouder man than Barrington Lyle has never lived. But if you wish to go to see him, I will gladly send you in my automobile."

The Northerners thanked the kind-hearted Colonel. A few minutes afterward they were being driven in the Colonel's car toward 1203 River Street.

BARRINGTON LYLE, thin, emaciated, with deep and dark shadows in and below his suffering blue eyes, lay very still upon a cheap bed that stood in a corner of the room he occupied on the second floor of a dilapidated, leaky, rat-infested frame building. He could think of nothing but the reunion of the Class of '79, which was to take place at a big hotel in New York on the tenth of the month. In his mind's eye he could see the four fine, gray fellows touching their glasses, and he could hear them saying "Here's to good old Barry!" And he knew that he would almost sell his immortal soul for the privilege of being with them—for it was as a good man loves his brothers that he loved dear old Jack and dear old Chass and dear old Dick and dear old Pat.

There was the sound of well-shod feet on the rickety stairway. He wondered who it might be. Then the sounds ceased, and there was a gentle rap at the door.

"Please come in," invited Barrington Lyle, in his low, well-modulated voice.

The door swung inward, and four silk-hatted elderly men, who seemed as much alike as the fingers on one's hand, entered the room. They did not even glance toward the broken cast-iron stove, or the small boxes that had been used for chairs, or the big box that had done service both as a dining-table and as a work-table, or the litter of tools and iron things. They lined themselves up beside the bed, and all smiled.

Said John L. Bolton: "Do you remember us?"

Barrington Lyle struggled to a sitting posture and put out his pale, trembling hands.

"Remember you!" he cried, his eyes filling with tears he could not keep

back, a very small pink spot in either cheek. "Do I remember you! Jack Bolton, of course I remember you—and Pat, and Chass, and Dick—who used to tie knots in my shirt-sleeves for fun! Class of '79—rah-rah-rah—but I'm too weak to give—the yell. Boys, I'm sorry—for you to know; but—I'm so glad—to see you! May God—Almighty—bless you—for coming!"

They took his hands, his pale, trembling hands; they pressed them, and shook them, and caressed them—poor old failing hands! After a few minutes—Barrington Lyle sank back, utterly exhausted. John L. Bolton, man of iron, stern old warrior in the battle of life, leaned forward and smoothed back the thin white hair from the patrician forehead as gently as Barrington Lyle's own mother had ever done.

"It's all right, Barry; it's all right," he said in his throat. "You needn't care that we know. It's all right. Everything is all right."

WHEN the Southerner had in a measure recovered, he asked them to put pillows to his back, that he might sit up comfortably. They did so, and afterward drew up four boxes and seated themselves.

"Why didn't you let us know?" blurted Charles K. Matthews. "We could have found no greater delight than that of—er—lending you a hand."

"I didn't want to be an—that is, I didn't want you to know that I was the black sheep of the Class." And Barrington Lyle smiled a smile that was pitiful. "I couldn't bear to have you know that I was the one nobody, the one failure of us all. A—a failure!" The word was as bitter as gall and wormwood to him; the light of a great torment was in his blue eyes when he said it. "A—a failure!" He went on weakly: "Boys, heaven knows I'm glad that none of you know what it is to be a complete and utter failure like me."

"Rot—you're merely unfortunate," said John L. Bolton.

"Of course, Barry!" said Richard W. Armbrust.

"Merely unfortunate," said Charles K. Matthews and Parham C. Ridgeford, in one voice.

"If it wont worry you too much," requested the railroad president, "tell us all about it."

Barrington Lyle told them, a few words at a time, all about it. It was a long story, and it was a sad story. He had always wanted to make things, to create. His classmates remembered that from the days of '79. When he came home from the North, he invented something that sold for a handsome sum, and that had decided the course of his future life. There had followed years and years of patient study and toil, during which not one invention had been successful. Still he had worked on untiringly, unceasingly, always hoping, always struggling toward the bright dawn that had never come. He had sold the fine old home out on the Thorndale Pike, and everything else he had inherited, to pay his expenses. And now all was gone. . . .

Once he had almost won success with an engine that ran by kerosene. He had been only a few days too late in applying for a patent on an appliance for cotton-gins. His latest and last invention was an electrical signaling-device for railroads, which, he was sure, would save hundreds of human lives every year. This was now being considered by a great Northern company, and he was expecting to hear from it every day. And if that, too, failed—

He tried to smile, and threw out his hands. His eyes expressed infinitely more than anything he could have said. His chin fell upon his breast, and his slim, nervous fingers began to pick at the coverlets.

The four Northerners, too, bent their gray heads. For a long time the silence of that poverty-ridden room was like the silence of the endless halls of eternity. The first to speak was John L. Bolton.

"Who is your doctor, Barry?"

"Doctor Greene," answered the unfortunate inventor. Doctor Greene was the charity physician.

"Is he a good doctor?"

"I think so. At least, he is a good, kind man, Jack."

"And he says you're not going to last more than a few months?" continued the railroad president.

"I forced him to tell the truth. Yes, he says it. And he isn't mistaken, Jack."

"Uh-hum," mumbled John L. Bolton. "Might be a good, kind man, Barry, and yet not be a first-class doctor. I think I'll look up the best medico in Memphis, and bring him out here to look you over. Then we'll see about getting you into better quarters, Barry."

"No! You—you mustn't spend money on me! These quarters will do for me, you know. I won't need them long. Of course, I am not ungrateful, Jack; but—"

The everlastingly proud Barrington Lyle turned his face away and stared toward the rain-streaked wall behind his bed.

"Tut!" growled John L. Bolton.

"Tut!" repeated the other three New Yorkers.

THE best physician in Memphis visited Barrington Lyle two hours later, and diagnosed his case thoroughly. He told Lyle that he was in no danger at the present; but he did not hold out a false hope to him. He told John L. Bolton afterward that the sick man could not possibly last more than two months.

"Is there a climate anywhere in the world that would benefit him?" Bolton asked.

"No," answered the physician, shaking his head. "The poor old fellow is completely worn out."

After much persuasion the old Southerner consented to being taken to an exclusive hospital that kept its patients in nice, comfortable rooms to themselves instead of in wards.

When the four Northerners were on their way to their hotel that evening, John L. Bolton gave utterance to a plan he had been turning over in his mind.

"Listen to me, boys," he said, speaking as he was wont to speak when he meant business and nothing but business. "We've got to make Barry's last days happy days. We've got to do it. We can't do it by simply taking care of him; you know that. You know him as well as I do. We are going to make him believe that at last he is a success instead of a complete and utter failure.

And this is the way we are going to manage it:

"I have learned the name of that company that is looking into Barry's latest and last invention—the invention, by the way, is ingenious; but it is too expensive to install and too apt to get out of order to be successful. We're going to wire that company to accept the invention—to offer Barry one hundred thousand round American dollars for it; and we four are going to pay the money. We mustn't let him die thinking he's a failure; that's what hurts him so. You can easily see that he is quivering with anxiety while he waits to hear from his electrical signaling-device. What do you think of my plan?"

"I think it's a great idea," answered Richard W. Armbrust. "I am heartily in for it."

"And so am I," said Charles K. Matthews and Parham C. Ridgeford.

"To a telegraph-office, then," smiled John L. Bolton.

THE next afternoon the five were gladly talking over the good old irresponsible days together when a nurse entered the room and delivered to Barrington Lyle a yellow envelope. Lyle's hands trembled so much that he could not open it without damage to its contents, and the railroad president went to his aid. Lyle unfolded the typewritten sheet and read the few fateful words at a glance. His face flushed slightly, and his blue eyes lost their shadows and lighted as with a light from heaven; he thrust the sheet into John L. Bolton's hands, looked upward, raised his lean, white arms.

"Oh, thank God!" he breathed.

Then he lay back quietly, smiling as a child smiles when it is asleep, and was very still. At last, at last, he had done something worth while: he had placed, at a splendid figure, an invention that would save hundreds of human lives every year—and he would not have to go back to the dust whence he had sprung, a failure! How beautiful was the thought, how fine and how wonderful!

And now the notable Class of '79 had no black sheep!

John L. Bolton turned his heavy jerking face away and said boldly to the other three New Yorkers:

"By Jove, boys, old Barry has an offer of a hundred thousand for his invention!"

Parham C. Ridgeford, Charles K. Matthews and Richard W. Armbrust went to their feet. In turn they read the message. There followed handshaking and congratulation.

Barrington Lyle outlined his plans to them a little later. He would buy back the old home on the Thorndale Pike, just out of the city, where he was born. He wanted to go back there to die among the scenes of his early life, where he had chased butterflies and fished in the little river and hunted the fox, where he had knelt with his brothers at the frail little mother's knee to say his simple bedtime prayers, where the strong personality of his gentleman father lingered everywhere.

For he knew that he was going to pass out, that his race was almost run. The great doctor might as well have told him the whole truth. He knew he was too old to recover; he was fifty-eight and broken, so broken. He had one request to make of them: wouldn't they accept his money and his property when he was no more on earth? It was a special request. He had no relatives living. It would please him so much. They were all he had to love, just them, of the Class of '79. Wouldn't they?

Since he wished it, they would accept the money and the property.

He appeared to be as grateful as though they had done him some great favor.

A few days later the four New Yorkers started back to their New York to take up the old life again. And they knew in their hearts that they had never before seen such happiness as that which had come to them because they had made Barrington Lyle a success instead of a failure, a man perfectly content instead of a man writhing miserably in the gulf of despair.

The money came at once, and the old Southerner bought back the home his

father had built out on the Thorndale Pike, and had himself taken there to die.

And the finest spot in his little, little future was the day when his four classmates were to visit him again, which was set for a month later. Barrington Lyle was sure he would last that long.

TRUE to their promise, Charles K. Matthews, Parham C. Ridgeford, Richard W. Armbrust and John L. Bolton returned to Memphis in April, and an automobile carried them out to the old Lyle home on the Thorndale Pike. They were sad, silent men, for they felt that this would be their last meeting with good old Barry Lyle.

A tall, straight, white-haired man in gray trousers, long black coat, stiff white shirt, black string tie and broad-rimmed black hat, walked down between the rows of elms and magnolias to meet them. He came with both arms outstretched, as a good man comes to meet those whom he loves as he loves his brothers. It was the man who had starved himself that he might have stationery bearing his family's coat-of-arms in blue and gold, Barrington Lyle. He had almost entirely recovered; his malady had been not of the flesh but of the heart and of the spirit, and the wine of success had removed it and well-nigh made him whole.

"I kept it a secret, because I wanted to surprise you!" he said joyfully, as they began to wring his hands.

Late that night four big, broad, gray men who were as much alike as the fingers of one's hand stole out of the fine, old-fashioned home of the Lyles and went far into the orchard. Without a word the railroad president knelt in the lush green grass, and the others silently followed suit. John L. Bolton spoke:

"Almighty God, we are much obliged to You. Please believe us when we tell You that the life and the happiness of old Barry Lyle are worth to us a hundred thousand times a hundred thousand dollars."

The Class of '79 was a class of remarkable men.





THERE were times when Bulstrode Ransome's face had an ascetic, almost priestly beauty. Long years in the wilderness, hard physical labor, clean living, resolute, driving purpose, directed to a single end, had written their story on him. "Dimples" Holt, his partner, who understood him best, was puzzled and fascinated by the problem.

When success came, success beyond ambition's most daring hope, it brought no exultation. The fact that he, inspired by Dimples, had been able to wrench from the Mycroft gang the hundred and fifty thousand of which they had robbed Ransome's inexperience, brought the satisfaction of an amply avenged wrong, but no more. It seemed sometimes as if ultimate triumph had not compensated the earlier defeat. Cold as ice, hard as steel, victory found him as defeat had left him. There was the same tinge of ruthlessness, a contempt for men that is a deeper evil than bitterness. He brushed through them as if they were floating thistledown. Holt was the exception.

There had been a time when Ransome regarded Dimples as an amusing lightweight. His good nature, heedlessness of money, tolerance of all sorts and conditions of men and women, seemed weakness. Dimples, hunched in an easy-chair, poring over the Iliad,

neither knowing nor caring sometimes where the next meal was to come from, was an object of more than curiosity to the other. "Bull" Ransome had never spent ten minutes over a book in his life, and he had the leaven of a thrifty New England lineage at core. When he found that Dimples could do things, and was a figure of some consideration among men who count, his standards for a time were disordered.

"What's it all about, Dimples?" he once asked concerning the book, and received a glowing narration of the great conflict.

"What were they fighting about?" inquired he again.

"A woman," answered Dimples, and then he described, as only a word-artist in love with his subject could do, "the face that launched a thousand ships—"

"Huh!" grunted Bull.

"And one day," said Holt, "she'll cross your trail, you great, black block of ice, and you'll drop gold, and success, and revenge, all you have now and hope for hereafter, and follow the prints of her feet, though armies and hell stand in your way, till you come up with her, and lay your neck in the dust for her to put her foot on."

"Huh!" said Ransome again.

Dimples' hosts of women friends,

their pictures on the walls, the dainty feminine envelopes in his mail, all inspired Ransome with bewildered awe. Bull had never received a letter from a woman in his life.

There had been, however, an episode in Ransome's life that even Dimples knew nothing of. Had Holt even suspected, he might have better understood some phases of his friend's character. It had happened in the spring before Ransome burst in upon fortune, when the struggle was bitterest, the outlook at its blackest. Everything had gone into the great hazard. Even his horse Bull had sold, and he tramped the long trail from Oxbow to Mooseyard, big, high-couraged, indomitable.

The heady wine of spring was in the breeze, the living woods an Arcady, and as he strode up the hill from Oxbow, the girl, just blossoming into radiant womanhood, came dancing down the trail. Her dainty hood lay back on her shoulders; a bunch of woodland flowers nestled in the bosom of her dress. He knew her, Ellen Mordaunt, daughter of the doctor in Oxbow.

Every fiber of his body tingled at sight of the glory of her. They paused a moment to speak, and he turned with her, helping her search for the flowers that bordered the trail. The twig of an overhanging branch caught her hair, and with trembling fingers he helped to disengage it. How the madness came upon him he never knew, but as they stood a moment, her laughing face upturned, he swept her into his arms and kissed her on the full red lips. The next moment he released her, pale, trembling with anger. As he stood, exultant yet awed by his glorious madness, she struck him across the face with her riding-whip and swept past him like an infuriated goddess.

He was not wise in his understanding of women. Later, when he made his strike, he sought her out, manlike or childlike, with the prize to offer. The splendor of victory lay in the fact that he could go to her with filled hands. Perhaps had he made the attempt in the days of struggle, it had not been so vain. He was awkward and diffident, she proud and high-spirited. He spoke more of the smaller gift than the greater

he desired to offer, failed in his great ambition and remained unforgiven. Neither spoke of it again. Ransome hid the bitter disappointment in his close-locked heart.

IT was noon of a fine June day. Dimples Holt sat in his office on Broadway. On the door one read:

RANSOME & HOLT
ILLAD GOLD MINES
MOOSEYARD

Bull had charge of the mines, while Dimples made his headquarters in New York City, attending to the Company's affairs there. As a permanent abode, the wilderness made no appeal to him. He loved the sparkle, glow and color of life. Friends were more than half existence to him; the Knickerbocker corner held more of the world than all the vast expanse of the desolate Northland. But in his mood to-day New York did not satisfy. The office-block had become a prison.

He was a little tired of the plutocratic life. The taunt of his newspaper friends that he was assuming the physical contours and Philistine outlook of the magnate touched him to the quick. He saw himself a member of a Business Men's Gymnasium, a spectacle for the youthful and ribald. The prophecy that he would fall into the commuter's Nirvana, with trains and things to catch, sent a chill to his free soul. In the midst of his reflections Ransome entered. He had been hustling round town looking up new machinery, and intended to go home that evening. He wanted Dimples to return with him. There was superfine fishing in the Oxbow stream.

"Believe I will, Bull," said Dimples. "I'm purely ornamental here with Judson at the wheel. He's got a clock for a soul, and to disarrange it you'd want a crowbar, a burglar's jimmy, a dozen sticks of dynamite and a kit of operating-knives. He's one of those darned treasures you're happier for not finding. It scares him stiff when the boys cut loose a bit here or a bunch of girls come in to take tea with the lonely plutocrat. Thinks I'm sickening with Pittsburgitis. I'm really no credit to a beastly

rich mine and Judson. I've got to get out of this stall, away from the bean-bag and corn-bin, and save my soul alive."

Bull listened till he ran down; then he drew a paper from his pocket and spread it before Dimples, who smoothed it out and began to read. It was a prospectus. Paper, printing, subject-matter, alike the work of artists. It set forth that the "Holt Discovery Gold Mine" had been duly incorporated, capitalized at a million and split into hundred-dollar shares. It recited in graphic though chastened language the story of its remarkable discovery by the famous Mr. Holt. It was not an ordinary speculative hazard, but a real mine, in actual operation, and gold-producing. Appended was a report by the eminent Skinner, a mining-engineer familiar with the Oxbow country. Without being too fulsome, it indicated one of the rare, gilt-edged opportunities of life.

WHEN he had read it, Dimples ruffled up his hair and grinned at Bull.

"Say what you like, Bull, you've got to hand it to 'em," he said. "They have got old Bruce's spider looking like a quitter."

"And your name plastered all over it," growled his friend.

"What of it? You are not Dr. Cook of Brooklyn and my name's not Peary. I did discover it. I am the sole and only, you jealous thing," said Dimples.

"I'd have my name off that damned swindle so quick it would make them dizzy," snarled Ransome.

"Dare say you would. That comes of being the violet type. I like footlights, limelights, headlights, tail-lights, and then some. My middle name is Phœbus," declared Dimples. "Damn it all! be fair to 'em, Bull. It is gold-producing. 'Way back of my mind there is always the notion it isn't the quince it looked first over. Anyway, they acquired it, and paid like little men."

"And you'll stand for your name as front horse in a crook's tandem? What of the people it will help to rob?" demanded Bull.

"How long have you been a muck-raking sucker-guardian?" answered

Dimples. "Any man in this land of the free has a constitutional right to prophesy all he wants. "What would become of the pill millionaires and politicians if you cut out prophecy? The legal limit to pulling a man's leg is the exact point at which it wont stretch any further. Beyond that it becomes, I think they call it, mayhem, or some such neat title. Let the money world paddle its own canoe."

"It's no joking matter, Dimples," said Ransome earnestly. "I know one case where they have taken fifty thousand, and it will mean stark ruin."

"They'd just as soon break a woman as a man; money has no sex," said Dimples, turning the pages of his book thoughtfully.

"You have heard of Doctor Mor-daunt, down at Oxbow?" Ransome went on quickly. "Had quite a bunch of money once. Dropped it here and there among the thieves. A gentleman who knows a lot of things but not men. Skinner got him for all he had left, fifty thousand, and the daughter—well, she's the kind that never ought to know the meaning of trouble about a thing like money. You know what I mean, Dimples."

"Yes, I know," nodded the other.

"It's the old game," Bull went on. "Regular flotation with legal frills and safeguards. One or two head of bigger game picked out of the herd because they are safer. It's the hundred-dollar piker who squeals. The money swapped for stock slides into the vendor's pocket. There's a splash one morning; the water's ruffled; then it smoothes out again with a drowned man under its smiling face. You know, Dimples?"

"Yes, I know," was the reply, as Holt knocked the ashes from his pipe and rose from his chair. "Guess I will run up with you to-night, Bull."

THE church was dull and drowsy. Dimples began to regret the impulse that had made him quit fishing at the bell's call. The hymn was "Rescue the Perishing," and he felt that if it was anything like a hurry job, their chances were slim. He had resigned himself to a dull hour when the door-

opened and two persons entered. One was a slight, rather distinguished-looking elderly man. Dimples classified the weak, petulant, obstinate face instinctively. Following him came the girl. Tall, straight as a young larch, with lithe, exquisitely fashioned figure, rounded into perfect womanhood. She wore a light summer dress, a dark ribbon belting the slender waist. Beneath the wide-brimmed straw hat the rippling dark hair framed a face of rare loveliness. A delicate tint of summer brown finely shaded the rose-and-white complexion.

When the service ended and the congregation streamed into the sunlight, the Doctor was about to come over to greet Ransome, whom he knew, but the girl adroitly maneuvered him away. There was more than ordinary disinclination in her action and look. Clearly, Dimples felt, Ransome and Holt stock did not stand high in that quarter.

For the next few days the partners tramped the hills between Mooseyard and the scene of Dimples' former activities. Ransome's ambitions had not been satisfied by his strike; he had ideas about the surrounding country and developments, and had backed his judgment by securing quietly and gradually such properties as he desired, some of which ran close to the Holt Discovery. When they had finished their inspection, Bull returned to Mooseyard, while Dimples went back into the wilds for a day or two in an angler's paradise he knew.

Late one afternoon Dimples strolled across to his old mine. Work was still going on there, but on a reduced scale. He was curious to see how the shaft was looking; so he sought his old pit-boss, whom Skinner had taken over, for the requisite permission. Failing to find him, he descended the ladders, but could see no one at the foot of the shaft. Looking round, he noticed that Skinner was making a lateral drive northward, and going to the mouth of the tunnel, he heard men at work. He passed into the dark opening and went forward, surprised that the cut extended so far. There was the glimmer of a light ahead; so he shouted. Imme-

diately the light went out and he heard hurrying steps. A moment later he was seized and borne to the ground. A bag pulled over his head, half-suffocating him, showed the uselessness of further struggle, and he was carried into the pit, hoisted to the surface and released from his uncomfortable head-covering.

"A pretty way to treat an old boss, Angelo," he said, dusting away the signs of the fray and laughing at the astonished gang.

"Me no know you, Mist' 'olt," said the scar-faced ruffian in deepest penitence. "Me think you some bum round. You excusa me, Mist' 'olt." And the three others stood round, caps in hand, shrugging shoulders and explaining volubly and in unison their profound sorrow.

"That's all right, Angelo," replied Dimples. "I was just hunting for you. How's Concetta and little Giulia?"

"Ha! Mist' 'olt, he think of Concetta and my little Giulia," exclaimed the murderous-looking brigand in operatic ecstasy. "You come my house, if you please, Mist' 'olt—everybody come; we have gooda time. He ask after my Concetta and little Giulia!"

Dimples went and spent a roaring night; smoked long, rank Italian cigars, drank much beer, danced with all the girls in the colony, played cards, shouted and hammered the table with the noisiest in the bedlamite "finger" game. He had a head like an operating concertina-band in the morning, but he was king in the colony, and there are penalties as well as privileges attached to royalty.

IT was noon of the following day when Dimples entered Oxbow and found the place he sought, a drearily pretentious house, standing in a clearing with its back to a dense wood. To Dimples it looked like a living creature at bay; driven back and farther back, until cornered, it had turned desperately on its pursuers. A well-kept lawn and some flower-beds gave it distinction in a country where beauty is rarely appreciated except on a currency-bill.

Every mining-camp has on its fringes curious bits of human flotsam, stranded there by some tidal wave of

fortune, oddly out of harmony with their environment. Doctor Mordaunt was a New Yorker, who, well to do, had retired from medical practice to follow more closely mining fortune that had always attracted him. Easily cajoled and flattered, he had been an easy prey to the keen-witted sharpers who handled him. His daughter had watched the process, not without many a vigorous effort to check it, but his business vanity and obstinacy had nullified her efforts.

There were times when, despite her anger, her thought turned to Ransome. All her life latterly she seemed to have been associated with fortune's camp-followers. She had learned to hate the apologetic attitude toward the world, the passive waiting on events. The speculative, gambling spirit that seeks to ride to fortune upon another's labor or performance seemed to her insignificant and contemptible. Vicious itself, it bred meanness. She had seen her father, fawned upon till the robbing was complete and then tossed contemptuously aside like a squeezed orange.

Hating Ransome, as she believed she did, the fact that those who exploited her father were enemies of the Mooseyard man counted in his favor. The most vivid representation of independent, self-reliant power she knew was the big, square-jawed, masterful man, who rode as if the world were his. The men who trampled her father cringed before Ransome, feared and hated him. She had heard of his dark days, the dauntless struggle, the single-handed fight, the splendid victory, and with the secret that lay in her memory ever before her, it was hard to banish so splendidly insistent a personality from her life.

SHE recognized Dimples when he came to the door. Newspaper fame at the time of the gold-rush had made Holt a romantic figure in her eyes. Dimples wished to see the Doctor, and seemed rather disappointed to find him away.

"Rather a nuisance," he said. "There's something wrong with my eye, and if you don't mind I'll wait out there on that ripping little lawn. Cro-

quet, too! I haven't played since I decided I wasn't cut out for a curate."

She could not help smiling as she accorded permission.

"I shouldn't have made a half-bad curate, either," he went on in his odd way. "Everybody said I had the ecclesiastical bedside manner, so to speak, besides being a slasher at croquet. But there, reminiscences are boring. You must blame this silent land. One bottles up effervescent thought, and when the cork is drawn there's a verbal spray-bath for the vicinity."

Five minutes later he sat in a shady corner of the lawn, absorbed in a vellum-bound volume. There came from the kitchen a delicious odor, and he decided that the ambrosia of the gods was ham and eggs. A rugged farmhand went in and later reappeared, drawing a sleeve across his mouth, the bucolic sign of repletion. Pipe in mouth, he sauntered over to Dimples.

"Hurt yer eye?" he asked solicitously.

"Yep! Hurts like Sam Hill. Could you fish it out?" inquired Dimples.

"I'll try," said the man, proceeding zealously to work.

Ellen from the window watched the operation and the effort to tie a bandage.

"Perhaps I can tie it for you," she said, coming out to their aid. "There, does it feel better?"—giving the handkerchief a little pat.

"I never dreamed a handkerchief could do half the good," he replied. "The point is, if it can help so much when it's over the good eye, what would it do if you started over again and put it on the bad one?"

She looked at his visible eye, her own dancing with mirth.

"I don't believe there's anything the matter with your eye," she said, and returned to the house.

Presently the maid came out with a lunch-laden tray, and when the last of a desperate hunger was being appeased she returned. He remained until a message arrived from the Doctor saying he would not be home until late.

It was a red-letter day in the life of the harassed girl. He had lived in a wide world, knew men, events, books,

and he talked as if she were a mental equal, without sentiment or compliment. She picked up his volume of Homer, and there, a white bandage like a classic fillet shoved up on his chestnut locks, in the desolate garden of the bare new world he translated, in glowing, picturesque English, passages from the vivid epic.

Thereafter he came often, always with books and with the same cheery optimism. It was her one respite from the apprehensive life she lived. The clouds were massing thicker over the gloomy house; her father's despondency had rarer moments of the old-time hopefulness.

Holt never spoke to her of business; he never mentioned Ransome. Sometimes she wondered if he knew, but decided that the silence was but intuitive tact. By this time she felt the tightening of the coils about her father and herself, and more than once she had almost yielded to an impulse to speak to her new friend about the mine. Pride restrained her from what seemed an appeal for help.

DIMPLES had ridden over with a great armful of books and was talking over them in his illuminating, browsing fashion, when suddenly, glancing at her, he gathered them all up and dropped them on the grass behind his chair.

"You don't feel like books to-day, and I'm a beast," he said. "That's one grand thing about a book: when you don't like it, or feel just like it, you can chuck it into a corner, and no offense. With live friends we've got to be hypocrites even when our toes itch. Talking of friends, you never had a brother, did you? One of those rough, rude, bungling, in-the-way brothers?"

She shook her head, laughing at his delightful abruptness.

"Great mistake," he said. "I never had a sister—another big blunder. I mean a truly sister, you know, not the bluffs who love you and want to keep a string on you and marry the other fellow. It's a bit piggish, don't you think? Well, when it comes down to good, natural brothers, I fancy myself in Class One. You can shove me in a

corner, snub me, shoot sisterly little prickers and stickers at me, and I love it all. I tell you, sister Ellen, a human umbrella's a mighty useful thing. Now, to-day looks stormy to me. I want to listen, little sister Ellen, I want to listen."

It was not what he said, exactly; but something in his voice and manner drew her story. He was different from the men she had known, very gentle and, she felt, very strong. He listened, as a woman loves a listener at such times, silently, missing no point, radiating unspoken sympathy.

"That's what Ransome told me in New York," he said when she had finished. It was spoken half to himself, his eyes on the far hills. She started; her color deepened. He had never spoken of Ransome before.

"You see," he went on, "Ransome hates the crowd, and he's a strong man; love or hate, he never lets go. The crowd manhandled him too. He was a boy, green, trustful. They bled him a hundred and fifty thousand, and when they mauled him he never whimpered. That's the breed in him, the bulldog strain. He came back later, and this time *he* did the mauling. He had grown, and they ache yet, and whimper in their dreams by the fire at night, when nightmares come, about the sorrows of their mauling. Maybe, when you've thought the world pretty lonely, it hasn't been as desolate really as you fancied. . . . You've heard lots of things about me; did you ever hear of me as blackmailer?"

She looked up at him, the sun shining through the mists.

"Well, I am—unscrupulous as the very devil himself," he nodded. "I've got a new thumbscrew, a dandy too, my own discovery. It makes 'em yell and swear something horrible. There are more potential 'ouches' in it than in all ten thumbs of that hired man of yours, who tried to dig out of my eye what never was in it."

She watched him ride away, and he seemed to be carrying her load of troubles with him. She felt that chivalry did not pass when the blazoned shields that hung along the wall of Arthur's hall in Camelot crumbled to dust. Then

her thought went to Ransome. It gave her a strange sense of security to know that there had been out there in the darkness a watcher, strong, vigilant.

MYCROFT and his associates were not altogether dissatisfied with the position of the "Holt Discovery." There was a belt of blue in the erstwhile black sky sufficient to make several handkerchiefs. Matters were ripe for liquidation, and half the mine's cost had been recouped. Later there might be a chance for a new and more profitable venture with it. The sucker plant is unfailingly prolific. Holt was not a welcome visitor in their New York office, but it is not wise to be too ostentatiously rancorous. One never knows what queer combinations cynic Fate may devise.

"I wanted to see you about the 'Holt Discovery,' as I see you call your mine," said Dimples. "I've a notion of praying for an injunction!"

"Why not take it as a compliment?" suggested Mycroft urbane. "We bought the mine, and I supposed the name went with it."

"Not on your life," replied Dimples. "It had no such name, and I've no hankering to stand godfather to a spavined promotion. 'Who steals my purse steals trash.' You remember the rest of the saw about robbing one's good name?"

Pye puffed out his cheeks explosively. Skinner bared his teeth, like the wolf he was.

"I have neither time nor inclination to answer slanderous imputations upon our companies," said Mycroft loftily, with malevolence in his eyes. "What is it you want?"

"Eighty-five thousand dollars," replied Dimples. "I'll tell you how to draw the checks in a minute. First, I want a word with you about Doctor Mordaunt. Look here, you three! A game's a game, and there are tough ones played, but this is thuggery. You've got the old man, skin, flesh and bones. I understand the usual freeze-out move is on the carpet. When the Doctor and the few others have walked the plank, everything will be in order for a new campaign, *da capo*, as the music folks say. When you got Ran-

some you went after bear. Bear's good hunting: it's a case of potting him or shinning up a tree, with odds on the bear as a climber. This tame rabbit-shooting is no man's sport. Lord, Mycroft, what you've done would shrivel the soul of a louse."

"What's this, Sunday-school session or revival-meeting?" started Skinner.

"Revival-meeting, with three sinners at the mourner's bench," rapped Dimples. "What about the eighty-five thousand, Mycroft?"

"We have no time for your famous witticisms," spat Pye.

"We'll come to a show-down, then," said Dimples. "I was in the Oxbow country the other day and had a look your way. Possibly you don't know that we own the land north of you. I took the liberty of going down your shaft. —Sit down, Skinner, you don't look well. —Do you know what I discovered, Mycroft? Do you, Pye? Skinner does; that's what gives him the pea-green color. I found a nifty little tunnel running into our holding, and four dagoes on the job, bossed by Scar-Faced Angelo. Once I pulled a kid of his out of the lake when it was drowning, and he'd cut the throats of any or all of you if I asked him to oblige me with a little favor like that. I got the whole story—how you, Skinner, put him on the job, what you paid him, how much you have looted and what you have done with it. I haven't told Ransome yet, but you can guess what will happen when I do. You'll be glad of the bars to keep you out of his way. Is the answer still the same, Mycroft?"

The three uttered no word; they were incapable of speech.

"I want a certified check for fifty thousand dollars, payable to Miss Ellen Mordaunt. We have her father's consent to this," said Dimples. "I want ten thousand for the stolen gold. I want twenty-five thousand as alternative to prosecution. It is compounding felony, and possibly blackmail, but I'll take a chance, as I want a Hospital for the Camps up in that country. I had thought of something else to make up an even hundred thousand—so you'd better hurry, before it comes back to me."

"Holt! we couldn't lay hands on it," said Mycroft hoarsely. Dimples knew it was a lie, but it suited him to let it go.

"Very well, we won't be too hard; I'll make an alternative demand," he said. "I reckon the mine worth twenty-five thousand dollars of anybody's money, and I'll take a conveyance of the interests of the three of you in it, and a check for the other twenty-five thousand, in settlement of the Mordaunt claim. In addition I want the ten thousand for the stolen gold. Ransome and I will see to the hospital; it might be luckier to build it with straight money."

They besought him for easier terms, wriggled, sparred for time, but Dimples was adamant.

"Lawyer to draw the conveyance or police-officer, I don't care a rap which," he answered.

The lawyer was summoned, and while he was drawing the paper Dimples went into an adjoining office and returned with Ellen Mordaunt. By his direction she accepted the check and conveyance, and as they were leaving, he turned to the three.

"Never tried the Pine Tree gully, nor west of your shaft, did you?" he asked. "You can call me nigger if the big vein does not run that way. Ransome has a notion of the kind, and Scar-Faced Angelo knew more than you paid him to tell, I guess. Wouldn't it be funny if, after all your ups and downs, you had missed a real, juicy bonanza?"

"TELL me what it all means?" asked Ellen, as they stood in the corridor. She had arrived but an hour before, in response to his wire.

"That you have got twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of butter from the dogs' throats," he replied, "and are the owner of a ninety-per-cent interest in a property that will rival Mooseyard. We'll talk about it later, as I want some stock."

She began to speak her gratitude, but he interrupted her.

"You've got it all wrong," he said. "I'm only spokesman, go-between,

gooseberry, you know. It was Ransome who was the watchdog."

He paused, looking at her oddly, she thought.

"I don't know, little sister Ellen, maybe I am just a bad guesser," he continued, "but is there not some little chapter in the book about you and Ransome I've not been allowed to peep into?"

She looked at him with smiling gravity and nodded her head.

"He's awkward some ways, Ellen," he said. "Green as grass about women. He never had real or make-believe sisters, and when the one woman comes along she'll find a fine, big, clean, brave heart, all her own."

A new delight shone in her misty eyes.

"Dimples!" she whispered. "I may call you 'Dimples,' may I not?"

"It's an accolade," he replied with bent head.

"Dimples! I've got a secret. He brought me down from Oxbow. He was at the station. I believe he was afraid I'd send him home. He sat in another car on the train, and—" She hesitated.

"The good old watchdog," said Dimples. "And the 'and' part?"

"And—and—do you know, Dimples, I—I—I had to send for him," she finished, red as a rose.

"Brave lass!" he said.

"And it's all settled, Dimples dear," she continued. "But you can't deceive me. I know who wrought the miracles that mean so much to me. And—oh! here comes Bulstrode." And the giant, transformed, transfigured, came along to the shining-eyed girl.

"I've got to get right back to the office," said Dimples, grasping Bull's hand. "You children can call for me in an hour—if you are silly enough to want me. We'll set New York ablaze with Northern Lights to-night."

"Dimples!" She called him back softly, and putting her hands out, drew down his head and kissed him; and blushing like a great schoolboy, he plunged out into the bustling, prosaic life of Broadway.



"IT'S A BEAR"

by

Nina Wilcox Putnam
and Norman Jacobsen

"IS it human?" demanded Long Henry Robinson almost tearfully, pointing a finger down the wide and dusty Main Street in the general direction of the Pride of Wyoming Saloon. "I got a open mind and no undue prejudices, but I ask: is it human?"

Bishop Coggney disentangled the dishrag from the butt of his revolver, flapped it idly in the breeze and moved his great bulk in slow majesty toward the open doorway. No need for haste just because Long Henry Robinson was excited. Long Henry couldn't even keep a poker-face when he had a pair of deuces—which was sufficient to show anybody how nervous he was. But for once in a lifetime Long Henry had some basis for his temperamental behavior. The Bishop heaved an oath which politely breathed itself into a sigh just before reaching his lips, and after a dazed, amazed second, he turned within the kitchen again and beckoned to some one.

"Say, Kitty, kindly give an opinion on this," he said in his mellow voice. "Take a slant down the street! What is it? You're a trapper's daughter; you ought to know!"

And then Kitty blew out past him onto the porch—blew by like a warm-scented breeze, such as sweeps up through the pine-belt when spring is on the mountains and the fringe of the desert becomes alive with blossoms. And as usual she hardly looked at him as she passed. But she paused, electri-

fied, at the top step and threw back her curly golden head, laughing.

"It's a strange animal for these parts, all right!" she said, flashing a smile backward over her shoulder. "Though I saw the breed when I was to school in the East! What lovely clothes!"

"Huh!" said the Bishop contemptuously. "Looks more like a screech-owl than a travelin' man!"

"Traveling man, nothing!" said Kitty pertly. "He's a high-brow! I can tell by those bone-rimmed spectacles!"

"Bone, to indicate the nature of the head a-wearin' 'em!" the Bishop speculated. "But what the—that is, what can he be doin' here?"

"Come in on the stage from Cokeville," suggested Long Henry Robinson. "There aint been such a sight in our fair city since Frank the dago come in lookin' for his lost bear!"

The Bishop shook his heavy head sadly.

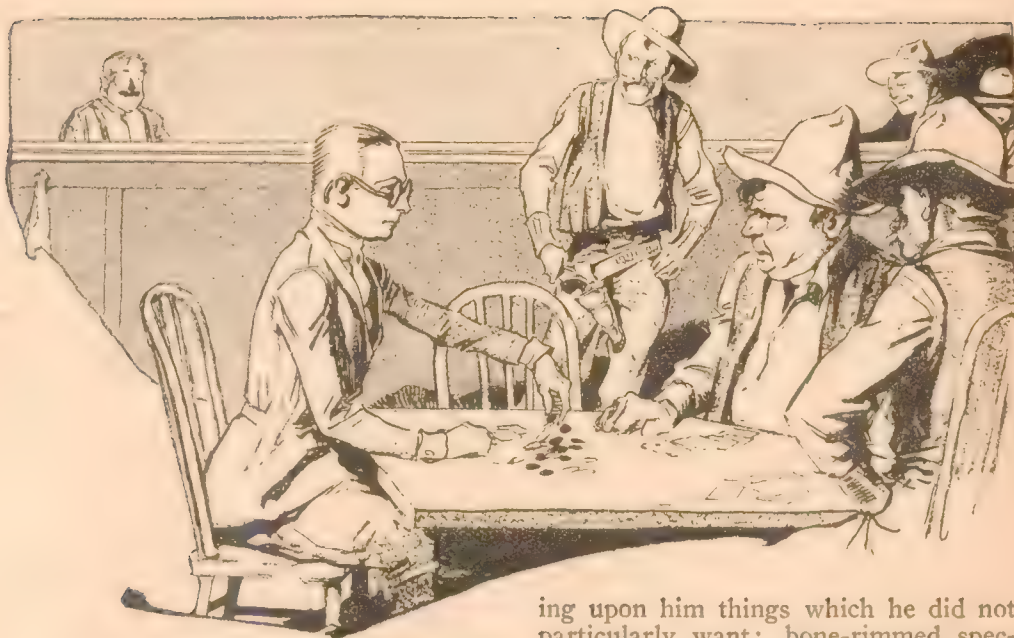
"It's a disgrace to the county," said he, "to have a feller like that get into it alive!"

"But *who* is he?" Kitty wondered aloud. "Such beautiful handbags, too!" She considered the matter in silence for a moment, the breeze stirring the little curls on her forehead in the most tantalizing manner. Then she curved back her red mouth in a way that was all her own, and spoke her sudden idea.

"Boys!" she cried, "*could* it be the new owner of the Winthrop outfit? It *is*!"

ON the instant Long Henry sprang to his feet.

"You're right—it is!" he shouted. "For he's just about due! By gum! Wouldn't you know it? Wouldn't you



know we'd have the devil's luck? *That* thing to boss *us*! That owl to run our outfit! My Gawd!"

The Bishop swelled visibly, his huge bulk trembling with emotion.

"If that's the feller we been waitin' to meet," he said feelingly, "if that's the old boss' son, then by—well, I resign, that's what I do! I resign as foreman of the Winthrop! The blame' tenderfoot!"

"Wait!" said Kitty. "He's heading this way. Keep your face!"

And sure enough, even as she spoke, it became evident that the object of their discussion was undoubtedly bound in their direction. He was a tall young man, still in his early twenties, but with that air of premature age which bone-rimmed spectacles, together with a certain look of gentleness and fragility, impart. His clothes were the utmost effort of a Boston tailor in whom refinement, and a sense of what was due to the scion of one of the Back Bay's oldest families, had struggled with an Anglo-French taste in checked worsteds. The result was striking—would have been strikingly good on the Miami golf-links; but in Letterbox, Wyoming, it was a trifle—well, too good! The owner wore it as though in meek acceptance of a fate which was constantly thrust-

ing upon him things which he did not particularly want: bone-rimmed spectacles, ultra-fashionable sport-suits, handsome, weighty luggage—and sheep-ranches in unknown places. In a vague, meek way, he seemed to look out from behind all these encumbrances, protesting weakly, unheard.

He did not make the progress along the dusty Main Street unaccompanied. There were those Smith twins, in the unkindly attendance of barefooted thirteen, a couple of loud-mouthed, younger hangers-on of theirs and several dogs, one of which—a noted scoundrel of a watchdog belonging to Joe Beezer, the hotel-keeper—was sniffing at the stranger's hand in an untowardly friendly manner. And making up the van, in sheepish guidance, was the talker, Windy Meeks—the (according to his own statement) best all-around one-gun man in Wyoming!

AS this group reached the side veranda of Kitty's house, Windy stepped forward with the bashful, helpless air of one who introduces an uncommonly embarrassing female relative.

"Say, Bishop," said he, "this here is Mr. Orlando DeLancy DeVanderbilt Winthrop, the new owner of the outfit."

"Orlando DeLancy Winthrop!" corrected the newcomer with a gentle smile,

holding out a hand beautifully incased in yellow chamois. "Most awfully glad, Mr.—er—Mr.—"

"Bishop Cogney!" supplied the Bishop, his antagonism crouching sullenly behind slits of eyes. "Pleased to meetcher!"

"Why, I know who you are!" exclaimed Orlando, his eyes lighting like two deep lamps behind the bone-rimmed glasses. "I know! You are the foreman! How splendid to meet you right away! The stage was a little ahead of time, and I would have been quite at a loss—"

Long Henry Robinson slouched forward at this juncture and announced himself by name.

"Robinson!" he said with a vicious eye on those yellow gloves. "Shake!"

Orlando complied unsuspectingly, winced but smiled again quickly. Then he saw Kitty; and the Bishop, Long Henry and Windy Meeks saw him see her, which is sufficient to say of the situation—or would be, but for the fact that it became plain that Kitty had been looking at him for some minutes past, looking at him without the proper scorn, which is saying quite a little more than enough. An impotent rage and resentment swelled in the Bishop's bosom. The temptation to muss the pretty clothes covering this pap-fed excuse for a man was almost overwhelming; but even stronger was the sense of his position as chief autocrat of Letterbox. Courtesy first!

"Our school-teacher, Miss Kitty Carston," he breathed heavily. "Make you acquainted with Mr. Or—Orlando—Mr. Winthrop."

"Welcome to the West, Mr. Winthrop," said Kitty sweetly. "I hope you are going to like it!"

"Thank you, Miss Carston!" said Orlando fervently. "Indeed, I'm sure I will!"

FOR a moment the others all seemed mysteriously excluded from the scene. It was an uneasy, unpleasing sensation.

"Ahem!" said the Bishop. "Perhaps we'd better be movin' over toward the hotel. How about it, Mr. Winthrop?"

"What—er—oh, by all means!" said

Orlando DeLancy Winthrop. Then he turned back to Kitty. "I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again!" said he, lifting his soft green hat politely.

"Oh, sure!" said she. "Come over some time and help wipe the dishes!" She laughed in a friendly fashion as the group moved off, and pointed to the Bishop. "Only don't go off with my dishrag, like that horsethief!" she added. "Bring it back, Mr. Cogney!"

With neck and ears burning a painful crimson, the Bishop returned, the checked towel in his hand. The new owner of the outfit laughed delightedly. The Bishop handed over her property to Kitty unsmiling and turned to rejoin the three waiting men, his heart afire with wrath and disgust. Ridiculous! Made ridiculous first shot, in front of this sissy from the East, this jackanapes of a dude of a tenderfoot! As if it wasn't outrage enough that the new owner of the outfit should be such a one, he, Bishop Cogney the invincible, had to be made a show of for him! Dishcloth, indeed! A fine introduction to your head sheep-herder! A blame' dishcloth—and Kitty and that Orlando feller laughing their heads off *together*! Kicking savagely at that well-known scoundrel of a watchdog of Joe Beezer's, he rejoined the group, which struck off down the irregular street in the dust and the late autumn sunlight. Windy Meeks and the dainty Mr. Winthrop led the way, the Bishop and Long Henry following in a silence that was punctuated at intervals by a stealthy snicker on the part of the latter.

"Cut it!" growled the Bishop at last, exasperated.

"I was laughin' at them gloves!" lied Long Henry with averted eye. And conversation languished until the hotel was reached.

THAT well-known scoundrel of a watchdog came to heel to Joe, lounging in the doorway and eying the approaching guests contemplatively. Windy Meeks performed the perfunctory introductions with an added ease of manner which had come with practice, and embellished the ceremony with a wink which Joe received and some-

how managed to return unblinkingly. Then the group hedged in a restless fashion toward the door of the bar. It was a significant move, but Orlando seemed not to notice.

"Dry to-day," remarked Joe unconcernedly.

"Most awfully dusty," agreed Orlando, looking apologetically down at his impeccable tweeds. "I feel grimy as can be. Might I have a room and bath; I'd like to change?"

There ensued a heavy silence, during which Orlando looked about him questioningly, from face to face. Then Joe detached himself from the wall, and with a "Wait a sec'," disappeared through a swinging door, by way of which he presently reappeared, bearing a cake of kitchen soap and a towel that looked as if it had the leprosy.

"The creek is behind the house, down through the fust meadow," said he. "And take your choice of both rooms upstairs: the doors is open!"

Orlando opened his mouth, but no sound came from it. Then on a second attempt he managed something about rejoining them presently when he was more fittingly arrayed, and fled up the protesting stairway, his bags bumping the wall, the soap clutched in one hand, the leprous towel trailing behind like a retreating flag of truce.

AS he disappeared around the last turn of the steps, the Bishop made a feeble motion in the direction of the bar, and a solemn group filed in at his heels. As soon as the horrible dryness had been somewhat eased, Cogney turned his back to the bar, and leaning upon it in an attitude severely clerical, he addressed the depressed audience.

"Boys!" he began impressively, "the question is: *will* we allow it? Shall it live in Unita County? I ask you!"

Windy Meeks drew a long breath.

"Not while I have my strength!" he said fervently. "Not so long—"

Long Henry Robinson was almost tearful, interrupting:

"Work for *that*," he moaned, wiping his thin little mustache. "Work for *it*! I had a pious mother, or I'd say what I thought of him right out in public! But here he is, the lawful owner!

We'll have to quit—that's all—vamoose, get out and hunt a new job. There aint no other way!"

"Oh! but mebbe there is!" enunciated the Bishop calmly. "We might make *him* do the travelin', for instance."

A murmur of protest arose, above which Joe Beezer's voice distinguished itself.

"No shootin' on these premises!" he vowed. "That stuff's all right in the movies, but it's too blamed hard on my mirrors and fixings—no cow-country entertainments around here!"

"Contain thyself," begged the Bishop, holding up a deprecating hand. "Who said anything about gun-play? That's old stuff—out of date. What we're after is to make him go of his own accord—hurry off for reasons of his own!"

THERE was a puzzled silence, broken by Windy.

"But how in the name of a one-eyed son of a—" he began.

"Listen," said the Bishop. "I'm goin' to preach a sermon. Now, if the truth is told, there's mighty few crimes in this world a man is really ashamed of. Even murder's a kind of a boast: look at the notches on some of the old-timer's guns! Scandal about a woman—well, there's pretty apt to be a bouquet somewhere about it for a feller to pin on himself! And a good liar is that proud of his imagination! And so on. A man can get found out in 'most any such things and still feel a *man*. But there's one thing nobody can face, and that is bein' made an all-round fool of—especially if he's already a good deal of a boob, like this feller is! So what we got to do is to make him feel such a goat that he can't bear to look us in the face. Then we will regretfully escort him to the first train east."

"And leave you in charge here!" said Long Henry.

"Huh!" growled the Bishop. "Maybe you don't think it means somethin' to me to quit this outfit! I been with it for near eighteen years, I have; but if that—that four-eyed jack-rabbit stays, I *quit*—see?"

"Don't blame you," said Windy Meeks. "I'll hit the trail myself. But how are we goin' to kid the guy along

so he'll get sore on himself and go hide his face? I got a suggestion. Just listen to me—"

"By showin' him plain that he don't belong!" said the Bishop firmly. "On the outside, we're goin' to be nice to him—polite no end. And we're goin' to take him to our bosoms, so to speak: act like he was one of us, let him enter into all our gentle sports and amusements without compunction—and skin him alive at 'em every one—most politely, of course!"

"As, for instance?" suggested the interested Joe Beezer.

"Possibly such as the imbibing of liquid refreshment—a friendly game of stud, or a gentle ride cross country," the Bishop supplied. "And so forth! If he don't pick up what is left of himself and take it home to Mamma, and if after that any girl would think about him twice—"

"Hist! Here he comes!" warned Windy. "Good idea, Bishop! We got it! You're on!"

"Remember, polite now!" hissed the Bishop. And the next moment Orlando DeLancy Winthrop appeared in the doorway.

CHAPTER II

AN uncontrollable ripple of amazement ran over the assemblage, for Orlando was arrayed as the Western hero of the most metropolitan of motion-picture dramas. His wide-brimmed soft hat was pinned to the crown on the left side, giving him a spuriously rakish appearance. His negligee shirt of white silk was topped by a stock fastened with a gold pin. On his legs were khaki riding-breeches and puttees which would have done credit to a riding-master. From the midst of this wilderness of properties, his gentle-spectacled young face stared with a peculiar incongruity, and his smile, though too sweet by half, had something almost irresistibly contagious and winning about it. He spoke with ease, and with the tact of inherited knowledge of social usages.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting," said he. "And now, gentlemen, what will you have?"

When they had ordered, Orlando stood in their midst, a light beer clutched in his lily-white hand, and beamed upon them pleasantly.

"When shall we be setting out for the ranch?" he asked. "Is it far?"

"Only about twenty miles or twenty-two," replied Windy. "With good riding, we'll make it to-night. I rode it in three hours once, but on horse that—"

"We led in a horse for you," said the Bishop. "But it strikes me it's a little late to start back this afternoon. You are prob'ly tired from the train, and the boys don't get in town often—they're a hard-working lot; so we kind of thought we might stay over. There's a high-class game on, over to Joe's brother's, too. Do you play poker, Mr. Winthrop?"

"I am really more familiar with bridge, but I know the basic rules of the game!" replied Orlando. "I learned them at Harvard, and I think I could recall them quite easily!"

LONG HENRY ROBINSON suddenly choked over an apparently empty-glass at this moment, and had to be restored, red of face and gasping, by a solicitous brotherhood.

"Then if you say so, we might go on down there to-night," the Bishop continued when order had been restored. "I take it the West is new to you?"

"This particular section, yes," replied Orlando, "though I've been in Colorado and know the western part of Canada rather well—the woods there! There is much splendid big game still left in Canada, you know."

This was a blow. The Bishop winced under it.

"Then you're a hunter?" he asked doubtfully.

"Only with the camera," replied Orlando reassuringly. "I have some photographs of woods-creatures which they tell me are quite unusual. I have been most fortunate in getting them. Somehow, animals seem to take to me, and I have consequently been able to secure pictures of them where others have failed. They do not fear me, as they do most people. I've gone in for entomology and botany too, since I was

a small boy," he added in half-apologetic explanation of his boast.

"Well, we've only had one other nature-fancier in these parts for some time," put in Windy Meeks. "That was Frank the dago. He had a trained bear that he said he caught wild, but I reckon it and him broke up some way, for one day he come back to town without it. Always claimed the bear *got lost in the woods!* Used to cry over it, he felt that sorry for the poor beast! But that's quite a spell ago, and the dago cried over that bear as long as he stayed in town, fearin' it would starve to death out there all by its lonely. But once I—"

"We do have quite a few black bear in these parts," explained the Bishop, "and they're savage as the devil! I'd hate to meet up to one onprepared!"

"Then I'm so glad I brought all my cameras!" exclaimed Orlando DeLancy Winthrop. And Long Henry's cough began troubling him again.

IF talkativeness were any proof of affability, after supper the Bishop's reputation for good-natured cordiality would have grown enormously throughout the district; for between the hotel and the Pride of Wyoming Saloon, he talked a dictionary and a half, totally ignoring the not always suppressed excitement which his companion's elaborate costume created during that progress.

Orlando was responsive. They conversed about his late father, who, it seemed, had had the good sense to stay most of the time in Boston, leaving the welfare of his Western holdings in the Bishop's capable hands. And it was revealed during this conversation that Orlando intended to make Letterbox his permanent headquarters. "Oh! *Are you?*" the Bishop commented—inaudibly, however. As they passed the Carstons' house, Kitty—a white glimmer in the dusk of the porch—waved and called something. The group marching toward the uncurtained gleam in the windows of the saloon, called back and passed along.

"Charming young lady!" remarked Orlando to a curiously unresponsive escort.

The Bishop hastened the pace, swinging them off down the street and into the yellow oven of a tavern. There, in the midst of the heat, the smoke and the odors of warm leather, perspiration and dust, sundry further introductions were accomplished; and at length Orlando DeLancy Winthrop was given a place at a table—over which a swinging lamp that proclaimed itself a "Midnight sun-burner" shed a broad yellow disk of light, revealing the surrounding faces by the shadows it developed upon them.

There was Long Henry, so lean and yellow, his clever nose preternaturally long and mobile; the Bishop, stout, round and smooth as an egg, his cheeks gleaming with sweat under the eyes. There was Windy Meeks, his face like the Rocky Mountains boiled down small; and a dozen other men, seated, or standing interestedly behind the chairs, their faces crudely carved into definite lines by the rough edges of civilization. And in their midst gleamed the thin, pale face of Orlando, his sensitive upper lip twitching almost imperceptibly, his eyes hidden and without meaning behind the disguising bonerimmed spectacles. There was expectancy in the air as the professional gambler—a sleek young chap with blond plastered down curls over either ear, and a small sombrero on the back of his head like a halo—dealt.

"Ever played stud before?" said Windy Meeks in the tenderfoot's ear.

"I believe not," replied Orlando. "How does it differ—"

"Well, this is not jacky pots," responded Windy. "The value of the cards is the same, but you draw your hands different; each feller gets a hole-card—see? And if he likes it, he stays!"

"Oh!" said Orlando, a trifle blankly as a card, placed face downward, was shot under his nose.

"Joe Beezer has bet two bits," whispered Windy. "It'll cost you two bits to stay—a quarter, you know!"

THE initial hand was uneventful. Orlando's glasses were inscrutable as he looked at his hole-card, and with a gentle smile he passed, on the first

round, having drawn a five-spot; Windy cleaned up a lean pot. The Bishop's eyes glinted. This wouldn't do: the youngster was not to stay out. He prayed heaven for luck, and accepted his deal, grunting. Then he watched. Confound that blank face of Winthrop's, anyhow! He raised the edge of his own card. It was a trey. He went on with the deal. This time Windy received a ten, and dropped out, but Orlando, on the strength of a jack, made a bet—to the Bishop's satisfaction when he dealt himself a second trey, which satisfaction swiftly turned to annoyance as he reluctantly slid a second jack across to the tenderfoot. Then followed a second king to the man on Orlando's left, and—merciful fortune!—a third trey to the Bishop himself! In a gruff tone, the Bishop raised. The pair of kings at Orlando's left kicked it. Orlando, his voice as hesitant as a girl's, raised the kings on the addition of a seven-spot. With his gaze fixed intently on the perpetrator of this piece of impertinence, the Bishop raised again—and Orlando drew his third jack!

"Beginner's luck!" he said pleasantly to the Bishop as he took the cards, shuffling them somewhat awkwardly despite the slim whiteness of his long hands. To the murmur from the standees who watched, he paid no attention, seeming not to hear it. The Bishop shifted, got up and walked around his chair and settled down to real business as Orlando began to deal.

The room was very close, and the men's faces grew more and more keenly expressive as the game progressed. Who the devil was this new dude, that he did not make an idiot of himself with due promptitude? The silence was full of the question. From the bar in the front room came the muffled sound of a voice singing—a drone half a note flat off the key; and more distantly, across the yard, a sheep was bleating in distress. Against the uncurtained window the night rested in velvet obscurity.

From the very first, this next hand narrowed down to a battle between Orlando and his foreman. With annoyance and incredulity the Bishop looked

from Orlando to his own hole-card—a jack. He stayed; so did Orlando. On the second round the latter showed a five of hearts. So far, so good, the Bishop muttered inwardly, receiving an ace of spades, and betting. Somewhat to his surprise Orlando came back at him.

"I'll raise that two bits," said he. And on the next round the Bishop drew a second ace and bet double. Orlando gave himself a seven of hearts, and the delicate voice remarked:

"I'll just double that!"

The rest followed rapidly. The Bishop got a nine and made a cautious little bet, his eyes glued to Orlando's expressionless face. The latter, having acquired a queen of hearts, raised again. Then he dealt the Bishop a second nine, and the crowd instinctively closed a little tighter. The Bishop could feel the man behind him breathe something into his ear; he did not hear what the fellow said, but his blood began to boil.

He'd just show this youngster!

Orlando immovably dealt himself an eight of hearts, and the silence about them became taut. The Bishop felt a red mist roll before his eyes, in the center of which there seemed, in his mental vision, to hang the mirage of a four of hearts. It hung there dripping with the earnings of the pot, and worse—far worse—with his pride as a veteran poker-player! That this jackanapes should draw such a hand was outrage, a breaking of all tradition regarding his species. There was only one thing to do—scare him, and scare him badly, by bluffing.

"I'm gonner bet the limit on this," he said aloud. Then the outrage of outrages occurred. The tenderfoot didn't fall. Instead, he sat there hiding behind those bone-rimmed spectacles of his and answered calmly.

"I'll raise you the limit."

For one wild instant the Bishop dreamed of calling him, but the vision of that four of hearts intimidated him while it inflamed him. How dare this Orlando not only draw such a hand, but actually play it? How dare—

"Well, Bishop, why don't you call him?" jeered Windy Meeks, who, having dropped out, didn't care. "Why

don't you call him—aint scared to—are you? It *looks* like a flush, but *is* it?"

Scared! It was too much! With a howl of rage, and blinded by the red vision of that four, the Bishop suddenly leaned across the table and turned up Orlando's hole-card.

It was an ace of clubs!

ORLANDO quietly raked in the pot.

The shout of laughter that went up was like the roaring of an angry sea to the Bishop's ears. And instantly, on its diminuendo, followed a scraping-back of chairs, a shuffling and scuffling, a series of more or less good-natured blows on the back and sundry cries—"Bluffed, by gosh!" "Been drinking again?" "Are you *loco*, Coggney!" and such. Somehow the table got overturned; and in one corner of the room Windy Meeks and Long Henry Robinson were doing a bear-dance with the Bishop's gun, which they had removed on general principles, their arms close about each other, their tears mingling. They had both tried bluffing the Bishop in their day. Quickly the fracas became general. Hitting out is such an expressive vent for mirth. Then suddenly Orlando's smooth, broad accents were heard suggesting that the troubled waters be quieted by the form of lubricant to be found in the bar. Docile to this suggestion, the crowd swayed toward the swinging doors. And as the stragglers were making it, Orlando came up to the Bishop, who was standing suddenly marooned amid the wreckage.

"I say, Coggney," drawled the tenderfoot, "here's the pot—you just attend to those drinks for me, will you? I'd like to slip off to the hotel and turn in. I'm rather fatigued with the journey and all that. Do you mind?"

There was a perfectly friendly tone in his voice. Evidently he regarded the break-up of the game as a trivial matter. At any rate, nothing in his manner even referred to it. Helplessly the Bishop accepted the money.

"Thanks most awfully!" said Orlando. "I'll just slip out this side door—oh, don't trouble! I'll find my way!"

With which he was gone, leaving a

whole string of unspoken words upon the Bishop's lips. After a silent moment, the doors to the bar swung open, and Windy and Long Henry appeared.

"Where's the son of—" began Windy, and stopped short, seeing the Bishop's face.

"Givin' me the money, and beatin' it for the hay!" responded the Bishop, his glassy eye daring them to comment at their peril. "Goin' to rest hisself for the ride out to-morrow—he'll need it!"

"How about that train he was to take?" Windy inquired mildly.

"Wait!" sternly commanded the Bishop. "Wait! Do you realize what horse he's goin' to ride to the ranch on?"

Long Henry breathed a negative. Evidently the Bishop's brain had renewed its activity.

"He's gonner ride Sea-cook!" he announced after an impressive interval. There was a horrified silence.

"Do you want to be up for murder?" whispered Windy at length.

"I wont be!" he answered, considerably cheered by their awe, and heading for the bar. "There's a fair bone-setter in town!"

MEANWHILE Kitty Carston was standing at her garden-gate. Under the mask of the early autumn night, the little town lay disguised before her, strangely seductive, like a familiar face half hidden for a carnival. A slow moon was rising over the shoulder of the mountain, and from the fringe of the desert came the cry of a coyote in greeting. The wind which rustled and whispered in the cottonwood trees overhead was cool and sweet from the snows and the pines on Immigrant Mountain. Down the road the drove of sheep in Beezer's corral bleated plaintively now and again. The lights in the little houses were blotted out one by one as the moon felt her way closer to the outlines of the buildings. A yellow shaft of light cut across the blue night like a golden sword, from the black spot of the saloon; and there was a spacious silence over all.

Kitty sighed aloud for sheer youthfulness and receptivity, and leaned her

elbows on the fence, taking care not to crush the white ruffles about them. There was not a living, moving thing in sight. Then suddenly upon the silence there broke a muffled roar. Something was happening at the Pride of Wyoming. Something humorous—as the boys conceived humor. It gave her a little throb of anxiety which she scarcely admitted to herself—sometimes the boys were a little rough.

The sword of golden light down the road was for an instant broadened to twice its width, and an unfamiliar silhouette came through the doorway and crossed the dusty street, vanishing immediately into the surrounding blackness. The roar in the saloon died down; and presently, through the restored quiet, she could hear footsteps coming toward her. Then the moon caught and revealed him. It was the new owner of the Winthrop outfit—alone, save for that well-known scoundrel of a watchdog of the hotel-keeper's.

To Kitty's amazement she discovered that her heart was undoubtedly beating a little faster for his approach. There was something appealing and pathetically isolated about the tall young figure in its absurdly conceived frontier costume. Of course, he was a joke; and yet, and yet—He was coming nearer every moment. Instead of turning and taking refuge in the house as she had fully intended, she further surprised herself by leaning over the gate. He must surely see her as he passed. He was singing a little tune as he approached—something with French words, unintelligible except when it sounded like a geography.

"Je donnerai Versailles, Paris et Saint Denis,

Les tours de Notre Dame, la cloche de Montpellier—"

It was exactly as a carefully brought-up, sailor-collared little boy might sing—with his governess! Kitty smiled a little contemptuously to herself in the dark. Then he was abreast of her, and seeing her suddenly, stumbled a bit, recovered himself and raised his gorgeous sombrero.

"Miss Carston!" he exclaimed. "I didn't see you at first!"

"I saw you coming out of—that is, I saw you a long way off," said Kitty, cordial despite herself. "You see, strangers are so scarce in these parts that you can tell one about as far as you can see!"

ORLANDO leaned against the fence, keeping his hat in his hand.

"A stranger!" said he. "That's my situation, of course! But I sincerely hope not to remain one for long. And somehow I don't really feel strange out here in this splendid quiet!"

He swept his sombrero toward the moon-clad mountains.

This was a surprise. Kitty looked at him sharply. His face was turned toward the sky, a fine, sensitive profile despite the hideous spectacles.

"I love the mountains too," said she. "I used to miss them a lot when I was in the East. My father is a trapper—one of the old sort, woodswise as a martin; and I used to be out with him a lot."

"Then you love the animals too!"

"Why, yes!" replied Kitty. "I've always had pets. Once we had a bear-cub. It was the dearest thing! I've always wished for another."

"I had white mice once," said Orlando, "and no end of birds, and a pair of lizards!"

"How nice!" said Kitty. How simple he was! Indeed, his simplicity was amazing, and rather—funny! "But I'm afraid you are going to find things awfully different from your home, out here, Mr. Winthrop. Our ways are not the same as Eastern ways, and the living! Of course we're not as bad as the old West you read about, but it's still a little—a little—"

"Crude?" he suggested. "Well, I don't mind that! Indeed, I have come prepared to find a rougher form of civilization!"

He smiled as he spoke, and Kitty, looking down toward the Pride of Wyoming, ventured the question that had been consuming her.

"You came out alone!" she said. "Was—was there any trouble down there?"

"No trouble!" said Orlando. "Just a friendly game of poker."

"And who won?" she asked.

"Well, toward the end, no one," he answered. "The honors were about even, as one might say!"

"Oh!" breathed Kitty. "I'm glad there was no trouble."

"None at all," said Orlando.

THERE was a silence between them for a moment or two. The moon with magic rays was making things of dross into silver. The breeze stirred his hair from its smoothness, and she thought it was nice hair when it was ruffled. He turned his hat around in his long, nervous hands. Suddenly he burst into speech.

"I—I say, Miss Carston, I hope you meant it when you suggested I might come to see you sometimes," he blurted.

"Of course I meant it!" she said. "I hope you will come often, if you decide to stay!"

"Oh, I'm going to stay!" said he.

Something in his tone emboldened her to ask another question.

"But Mr. Winthrop," said Kitty, "do you really think you are going to be able to live here? Do you believe you will like sheep-ranching and be successful at it?"

There was some quality in the silence which ensued that almost made her wish she had not asked. The very turn of his head as he looked away from her showed that she had touched a sensitive spot. But after a moment he faced her again and spoke with an intensity which startled her.

"I really can't go back!" said he. "You see, there's my family at home, my mother and my uncles. They—well, they don't think I amount to a great deal. I've always been a rather quiet sort of chap you know, didn't do anything brilliant at Harvard and haven't seemed to be able to get hold of a job that I liked, or that liked me, since I got through college. Really, I can't fail at this too! It wouldn't do, you know! A chap has some pride."

Kitty looked at him with new interest.

"I see," she said softly. And for another short space there was silence. "You will ride in often," she said;

"you're not more than twenty miles out."

"I will do so soon," he replied eagerly.

"I hope you will," Kitty assured him.

AGAIN conversation languished. Orlando DeLancy Winthrop seemed upon the horns of a dilemma—whether to go or to stay. It was as though he could not tear himself away, and yet felt that his time was up. Kitty smiled to herself. Poor fellow, how absurd he was—a dude in clothing only, with the heart of a child, and his transparent admiration for herself! Of course, it was ridiculous to consider him as a man beside the Bishop or Windy or the others; still—his clothes were lovely, and so was his language when he talked about the mountains. She took pity on his embarrassed silence.

"When are you riding out to the ranch?" she asked conversationally.

"Eh! Er—to-morrow morning!" he replied, startled out of a half-dream.

"It's nice down your way," she said. "It's my favorite ranch-house, and it has the nicest situation in this district."

"Really!" exclaimed Orlando. "How fortunate—for me, that is. I am so glad you like it!"

"It's right on the edge of the desert," said Kitty, "where you can see for miles and miles with nothing to cut off the sky. And the sage seems to get all purple and blue at sunset. And the other way, behind it, are the mountains. And there's a creek, with willows, very handy for the housework when the tank is empty!"

He leaned toward her as she talked, and something that emanated from him made her want to go on.

"This is all wonderful country!" she continued. "Wait till you see the sheep changing pasturage—thousands of them! They graze down on the desert when it's winter; and then in the summer they go up in the mountains. There's always pasturage on the edge of the snow. And you should see the creek here at shearing time! There's nothing like it—nothing! Oh, I've been East to school, but this is the place to be!"

"You are a poetess!" said Orlando when she had done.

"Oh, no!" said Kitty. "I couldn't rhyme it, like Tennyson or Wordsworth!"

Then Orlando said something which she didn't comprehend at all, but which was somehow pleasant to hear.

"*Vers libre!*" said he. "It is the feeling that counts—the secret sentiment betrayed by the very barren simplicity of the words!"

"Yes!" agreed Kitty vaguely, because she felt she ought to say something. All at once their situation was mysteriously reversed, and she was the tenderfoot—she, the most educated person in the county, except the doctor! But the feeling was not altogether unpleasant, for it made Orlando seem a man, and she merely a woman, and she somehow wanted Orlando to be—a man. And that necessitated some sort of superiority on his part. She was glad he had been unintelligible. For she did like him.

"About what time do you think you'll be starting off to-morrow?" she said, reclaiming the conversational reins.

"About nine o'clock!" he replied. "We should not be too late in starting."

"Nine!" she said. "I'll be just about opening the schoolhouse. It's next door to the hotel, so I'll see you go!"

"Oh! will you!" said Orlando. "How fine!"

HE raised himself from the fence and stood before her in the road. His face was in shadow, but the picture she made in the flood of moonlight, with her ruffles of white, and her yellow head gleaming, was reflected in the tremor of his voice.

"You surely will be there, to-morrow, Miss Kitty?" he said. "When we start off? Somehow it would be a great help to me if you would. You see, I'm a little like a chap going to Europe for the first time, don't you know—unknown waters, foreign lands ahead and all that; he feels a whole lot better if there's at least one friend on the pier to see him start! You understand, I'm sure. You don't think me an impertinent idiot, do you, for talking like this and assuming your friendliness and all?"

"Of course I understand!" said Kitty, a trifle breathlessly. "And I'll surely be there on time."

"Thanks awfully!" said Orlando with a nice smile. "Good night!"

"Good night," replied Kitty.

Then his face vanished into the shadow of his big hat, and soon the rest of him vanished also down the obscurity of the street beyond, that scoundrel of a watchdog following meekly behind.

For several moments Kitty stood quite still, though the sound of his footsteps had died away. A white moth came and fluttered around her head, even alighting on her shoulder, but she never noticed it. Then at length she sighed and turned from the gate.

"But he is *too* silly!" she said as though in contradiction of some statement. "What nonsense! Still, I couldn't disappoint him at nine o'clock to-morrow!"

CHAPTER III

WITH the early sun lending an added freshness to his already ruddy countenance, Fred Barringer rode briskly into town, mounted on a buckskin pony and pleasantly conscious of a new pair of fringed gauntlets. There was enough crispness in the air to make both horse and man wish they had a bit farther to go, and knew where there might be an extra world or two to conquer. Reluctantly they came to a halt, however, before the still-shuttered portals of the hotel, and Fred shouted "Hello." It was answered presently, from the rear of the building and the newcomer, allowing the pony to investigate whence the sound came, discovered Windy Meeks in the act of braiding the forelock of a neat roan. Windy was smoking an amateur cigarette and humming an unholy little song which he broke off into a greeting.

"Lo, Fred, you lump of pork!" he said amiably. "How's things?"

Barringer swung from his mount and approached, carefully drawing off the new fringed gauntlets in a manner that was at once modest and conspicuous.

"Slept halfway in," he announced,

noting Windy's silent appreciation of his new adornment, "and started early. Good thing I did, too! Say, do you know what I seen?"

"An angel," guessed Windy promptly.

"Don't get funny: what d'you think?"

"Well, what?"

"Fresh bear-tracks!"

"You don't say!" exclaimed Windy. "Where?"

"Right down across the road through Fontenell Cañon!"

"You don't say!" repeated Windy.

"Hey, come on in and tell the Bishop. He aint up yet. It's a shame to miss this chance! Got your rifle here?"

"Yep!" said Barringer.

The two entered the hotel by way of the kitchen, where John the Chink was mysteriously preparing the morning meal; and ascending to the room inhabited jointly by Long Henry Robinson and the Bishop, they entered without the formality of knocking. Long Henry was about dressed, and the mountain under the bedclothes that was the Bishop unrolled itself and received the news with equanimity.

"Huh!" said the Bishop, sitting up. "So you'd like us to drop everythin' and go after imaginary bear, eh? Nothin' doin'! We got other game *right here!*"

"What do you mean—other game?" demanded Fred Barringer.

"We got a tame animal here, with four eyes," explained the Bishop, "that's worth any six of your bears—that probably don't exist! And he's goin' to give an exhibition in an hour or so. Stick around!"

"What the—" began Barringer.

"The new owner of the Winthrop has come," exclaimed Windy. "Blew in on the Cokeville stage yesterday. He's the tenderest tenderfoot—"

"Positively succulent!" the Bishop pronounced, rolling out of bed.

"An' he's gonner ride Sea-cook out to inspect his property!" added Windy.

"Oh, is he!" said Barringer. "Then, believe me, I'll stick!"

"That's more than he will."

BREAKFAST at Beezer's Hotel was an informal affair, served by the silent Chinaman, no matter what name

he was summoned by—John, Tom, Chink or a mere expletive. But though the company was noisy enough, Orlando did not seem to hear, for time crept on and still he did not put in an appearance. A traveling salesman entering in the glory of store-clothes caused a momentary stir on the part of Fred Barringer, who was promptly set right.

"Oh, that feller aint a patch on him!" the other assured him positively. And the Bishop added: "I suppose His Lordship don't get up till late. Maybe we'd ought to go up and manicure him!"

"That hand he bluffed you on last night didn't need no manicure!" remarked Long Henry Robinson, thoughtfully picking his teeth.

"Aw, shut up!" growled the Bishop. "A fluke—that's what it was—a accident. The feller didn't know what he was doin'!"

"Mebbe!" said Long Henry.

"I wish he'd get up," remarked the Bishop, changing the subject. "Does he think we got nothing to do but stand around here all day?"

"I don't know what he *thinks*," said Windy Meeks, "but here he comes—and not down the stairs neither!"

He pointed at the window; and there, sure enough, was Orlando DeLancy Winthrop approaching along the trail through the field where the creek flowed behind the hotel. He was walking leisurely and was burdened with an extraordinary collection of impedimenta, most conspicuous of which were a butterfly-net on a long handle, and a flapping bathtowel. He wore the "Western" outfit of yesterday, with the objectionable hat still pinned up on one side, and there was now a camera slung over one shoulder by a strap, and a pair of fieldglasses where there should have been a gun. As he drew nearer, a heavy sigh went up from the audience; and then Orlando disappeared from sight temporarily, only to enter the room in another moment, smiling pleasantly and blinking at them all in a friendly way through the enormous spectacles.

"Ah! Good morning, gentlemen!" said he. "I am glad to see that you are up at last! This is certainly a fine day!"

WINDY MEEKS and Fred Barringer exchanged an otherwise inaudible comment: short and crisp, it was, unheard beyond themselves, and hardly cordial. The Bishop, on the other hand, conquered his feelings and in adherence to his settled policy arose in greeting.

"Good morning, Mr. Winthrop," said he. "Goin' to have some breakfast?"

"Thanks, I had mine some time ago!" Orlando replied. "And I've since been giving the neighboring fields an examination. I find several unfamiliar specimens of beetle." He paused here and searched in the depths of the butterfly-net, bringing forth a creature which buzzed loudly. He laid it on the table, where it crawled about uneasily, and then he offered a magnifying glass to the Bishop, who took it helplessly and applied it to his eye.

"No, no!" said Orlando gently. "You hold it over the bug this way."

"Oh!" said the Bishop, peering over it, the back of his neck growing red with annoyance; but he obeyed none the less.

"See?" said Orlando. "Its antennæ are unusually long."

"You bet," said the Bishop, handing back the glass and rising. "Vurry interestin'—but let's be gettin' started."

A gasp of horror went up as Orlando exposed a wrist-watch to view before answering.

"Eight o'clock!" said he, totally unconscious of the sensation he was causing. "A trifle early—say in about an hour?"

"All right!" said the Bishop. "I guess I kin get my trunk and silk hat packed by then, if the rest can. Nine o'clock, boys!"

FRED BARRINGER arose to protest.

"Hold on!" he cried miserably. "You aint goin' back without even a smell of that bear, are you?"

"Oh, shut up about that bear," growled the Bishop.

"But I tell you," began Fred excitedly. "—I tell you—"

"No, you can't tell *me*!" retorted the Bishop. "For we's got something else to do, like I told you before."

Barringer subsided at this, but Orlando had heard.

"A bear!" he exclaimed, "How delightful! I wish I might photograph it!"

There was an instant of confusion in the corner: Long Henry Robinson's cough was troubling him again. But when he had been partially restored, and led outside with his face still buried in his handkerchief, the Bishop explained. "The boys get all excited about a bear," he said, "and the minute they think there's one anywheres around, why they're after it! But Barringer, here, has a terrible imagination; there probably aint none. But if one turns up, why, you can take its li'le pitcher." he added comfortingly. "And now I'd better mosey along and see to the horses," he continued. "I take for granted that you ride, Mr. Winthrop."

Orlando smiled.

"Why, yes, I think so," he replied in his quiet way, "having always ridden a little in the park. But I had several special lessons in the riding-academy at home in preparation for coming out here."

"Oh, is that so!" remarked the Bishop politely, ushering him to the door. "See you later, Mr. Winthrop. I'll be around with the horses at nine."

Long Henry was waiting for the Bishop on the porch, and as that bland monument of urbanity emerged, Henry seized him by the sleeve and drew him off into a corner.

"Now look here, Bishop," he said huskily, "don't give him Sea-cook to ride—*don't*! It's murder; that's what it is!"

"Say, do you want that simp' to leave town or don't you?" the Bishop demanded.

"Of course I do!" Long Henry retorted indignantly. "But he aint done no harm; hobble his stirrups, and give him a bucking-roll, anyways!"

"Sure!" agreed the Bishop. "Lend me your coat for it. Say, you aint goin' over to his side, are you?"

"Not by a darn sight!" retorted Long Henry. "Think I want to work for a camera-fiend?"

"Well, then!" The Bishop waved the borrowed coat, and started off toward the corral. Long Henry sighed and rolled a cigarette. Certainly there was

a disturbing element in the air, and had been since the tenderfoot's arrival. The sooner he went, the better!

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Kitty Carston awoke that morning, it was with a vague pleasant sense of expectancy. For a long, lazy moment she lay staring at the low ceiling of her room, and wondering: then she remembered Orlando and smiled. And as she dressed, she smiled again and again. When it came to the point of choosing a gown, she took down a clean calico print from the hook, looked at it thoughtfully—and shook her yellow curls in an emphatic negative. Then she unearthed a flowered muslin that had flounces and put that on instead, preening herself before the scrap of mirror, and fastening a blue ribbon about her golden head. Then she frowned and took off the flounced muslin.

"My Sunday dress!" she said aloud, contemplating it as it lay on the bed. "What silly nonsense!"

She picked up the everyday calico and slipped her arms into the sleeves, looking into the mirror; but it wouldn't do.

"No!" she said. "It—it really should be shortened before I wear it again; I guess I will just *have* to wear my best dress, after all!" And so, persuaded by a reason which she was satisfied had nothing whatsoever to do with Orlando, she slipped out of the calico and into the flounces once more. Then she discovered with dismay that it was only half-past seven o'clock. Still, there was breakfast to get and the house to set in order. She hurried down the stairs and into the kitchen, stopping to peer through the side window before she stirred up the fire—and so noted the brisk advent of Fred Barringer and his new gauntlets. Then she set about her simple tasks, trilling a little tune—the same one over and over, until she realized it was that which he had sung—the one with the foreign words; so she stopped it and began on "Yankee Doodle."

Breakfast and the housework, which

were usually intolerably long, somehow got themselves finished with magical swiftness, leaving nearly an hour to school-time. So she set herself at the besmirched illegibilities which the pupils had presented as compositions the day before; but the labor on them grew to a Herculean task when gauged by the slow-ticking old clock on the kitchen mantelshelf. Suppose the boys should get started a little earlier! She shook her curls resolutely and returned to her task. No nonsense for her! But her best blue pencil was at the schoolhouse, and how could she satisfactorily correct exercises without it? Impossible, really! She stacked the bedraggled papers and picked up her hat, starting for the door. Then she returned to the mirror and fluffed her curls out a little. After all, the blue ribbon was better than the hat! She tossed the latter into a corner and stepped out into the clean autumn sunlight.

THE air was bracing and fresh, with yet a lingering warmth in it—a perfume of harvests ripe and gathered. And the little town was gently astir at its morning routine. Women were shaking rugs from their back verandas; the general manager of the combined store and post office was setting forth an anemic display of oranges and bananas on his steps: the "Pride of Wyoming" still kept its shutters closed, and Joe Beezer was puttying a pane of glass in one of his front windows. Taken all in all, it was a peaceful scene without portent of great events in it. The children were clamorously schoolward bound, their faces still comparatively clean, their shouts clear and shrill. From several of the houses little girls came to join her as she passed, talkative or sweetly shy, clinging, adoring. But for once she scarcely noticed them as they clustered about her, holding her books and papers while she unlocked the schoolhouse door. They followed her with nerve-racking clamor as she entered.

Inside, the little building seemed intolerably close, dusty, and confining. She straightened her desk and flung the windows open wide, looking with unadmitted anxiety toward the blank front of

the hotel beyond. But as yet there was only the imperturbable Joe Beezer, putting his window in a leisurely manner and whistling—*what?* Yes, actually whistling the tenderfoot's foreign little song! She glanced at her watch; ten minutes to nine!

Around the corner of the hotel Bishop Coggney appeared, leading a saddled horse and followed by a second—his own. He saw her at the window and waved a greeting. She had scarcely time to respond before Windy Meeks rode around from the opposite side and dismounted. He was followed almost immediately by Long Henry Robinson, who emerged from the same quarter, leading his mount. Kitty left the window hastily and ran to the little mirror which hung in the entryway. As she peered at herself she devoutly hoped that the Smith twins, who were viciously chanting something in unison outside, would behave well at the critical moment of Orlando's appearance! She gave the blue ribbon in her hair a pat, pulled a curl into place over her left ear and sauntered to the doorway in a casual manner—to hear what those Smith twins were singing, the dreadful creatures!

OVER at the hotel an informal crowd had gathered, and there was an air of expectancy about them that was at first difficult to account for. Joe Beezer had stopped mending his window and was talking in an earnest, remonstrative manner to Windy Meeks, who grinned slowly for answer. Long Henry Robinson was rolling a cigarette for the gang, passing nervously from man to man; and Fred Barringer posed at one side, hands on hips, in such a manner that (quite unintentionally) the new fringed gauntlets showed to advantage. Several other men from the Winthrop outfit had foregathered, together with the Chinese cook and a mob of schoolchildren. In the midst of this throng, which kept a safe and sane distance, was Bishop Coggney and the mount for the new owner.

This animal was the center of attraction—and justly so, for it could have been truly said that seldom, if ever before, had so many danger-signs been

implanted by Nature on any single specimen of his kind. He was uniquely, distinctively, marked with every sign that the knowing horseman recognizes and avoids. He was possessed, in the first place, of four lovely white stockings—as clean and innocent-looking as a baby's socks. He was blaze-faced, with one "glass" eye and a Roman nose and a blue-black coat like a satin sheath. For the moment he was quiet as a lamb, pretending to be looking somewhere over the heads of the crowd—at a sweet and distant vision of the horse's heaven, perhaps—such a gentle, lofty, innocent look he had. But he deceived nobody: not one in all that crowd but could read the signs on him. Even the Smith twins knew, and chanted joyously of his self-evident characteristics:

"Four white feet and a Roman nose,
Cut off his head and feed him to the
crows!"

He was saddled and bridled, and the stirrups were hobbled; and a bucking roll, formed of Long Henry Robinson's coat, protected the horn.

"Why it's Sea-cook," Kitty exclaimed under her breath, "the Bishop's own horse! Surely he can't intend to let Mr. Winthrop—the creature wont let anybody but Bishop come *near* him, and everybody *knows* it!"

EVERYBODY knew it, evidently, except Orlando DeLancy Winthrop, who now appeared in the doorway. A murmur arose at his appearance. For Orlando was equipped for the trip. He had his suit-case and his hatbox, camera, butterfly-net and glasses, all complete. For a long moment he stood there in the doorway with his impedimenta, and then he looked across and saw her, Kitty, on the schoolhouse steps. With almost incredible swiftness he thrust his belongings into the idle hands of the stupefied Long Henry Robinson, and apparently oblivious of the Bishop, of the horse and of the waiting crowd, crossed directly to her, smiling and uncovering his sleek head as he came.

"I was so afraid you would not remember!" he exclaimed. "It's awfully good of you!"

Kitty blushed. Those Smith twins

were giggling and taking notice—the horrid things!

"Why, I wouldn't forget!" she said in a low voice. "It would be so—in-hospitable!"

"And may I see you soon again?" he begged.

"Of course! The first free evening you have!" replied Kitty.

He hesitated, as if there was much that he still desired to say. But the consciousness of the waiting crowd was beginning to pull at him. He twirled his hat nervously.

"I suppose I must be off, then!" he said reluctantly. "Good-by, Miss Kitty!"

Kitty looked at Orlando, and then at Sea-cook, and gasped, holding out her detaining hand. "Wait a moment, Mr. Winthrop," she begged hastily. "I wanted to ask—"

"Yes?"

"Can you ride?" she asked, herself surprised at the entreaty in her voice.

"I hope so!" he said with a slight smile. "You see, I have been taking some lessons—at the academy in Boston."

"Oh!" said Kitty feebly. "I—I'm glad of that!"

"Well, good-by for the present," said Orlando cheerfully, and setting the absurd hat on the back of his head he went forward to his doom.

SHE watched him with a horrible sense of foreboding. Why, oh why, had she not really warned him about that awful animal! Was there really some challenge in his eye which had entreated her not to, or had she responded to something courageous with which her imagination had endowed him? He walked back to his men with a simple directness that made her wonder. What would happen? Would he be killed? He easily might be! It was terrible of the Bishop and the boys to do this thing! If he were killed, it would be murder, no less! With a sickening feeling of having helped betray him, she watched him approach his horse, scarcely able to control the cry of belated warning which sprang to her lips.

One other personality in that group was intensely interested in the proceed-

ings—and that was Sea-cook himself. With a glassy eye gazing, apparently, at the landscape, at the sky, at anything but the crowd and Orlando, he assumed an air of complete detachment. *He* was not concerned! But like the star actor who feigns utter contempt for and oblivion of his audience, he was none the less keenly conscious of it and lying low for his first dramatic effect.

This was seemingly mild and subtle action. Orlando approached him and attempted to lay hands upon the horn of the saddle. With a rhythmic movement that was like the gentle retreat of a wave, Seacock removed himself just out of reach. That was all: but it left Orlando clinging to the air with one hand. Then Sea-cook stood perfectly still again, as if nothing had occurred, and Orlando had another try. Again the seemingly absent-minded beast moved just out of reach—subtly, almost unconsciously, it looked, but still out of reach! A third unsuccessful effort on Orlando's part, and the crowd murmured a unanimous titter. The Bishop came to the rescue at this point, suave, solicitous, helpful.

"Perhaps you'd rather have another horse, Mr. Winthrop," he suggested.

Orlando regarded him calmly.

"If this is the horse you brought for me to ride," said he, "I intend to ride it!"

"As you say," assented the Bishop cheerfully. "Suppose we blindfold him then, while you mount—he's a trifle nervous, and we do that, sometimes."

ORLANDO agreed, and the blindfolding was proceeded with, Sea-cook submitting gracefully to having the light of day cut off by Long Henry's blue bandanna. He sank down in the center a little, and braced himself, but otherwise made no objections. Orlando succeeded in grasping the horn this time, and in another instant was in the saddle.

"I expect I'm all right now!" he said in a clear voice which carried amazingly on the waiting silence.

"Good!" snapped the Bishop, drawing off the blue bandanna with one hand, and making a lightning-swift pass at the horse's face with his hat, which

he wielded with the other. Then a startling thing happened. Sea-cook moved backward so suddenly that Orlando found himself with both arms around the creature's neck—and then somehow managed to straighten himself in place before the crowd had time to laugh.

However, this was only a beginning. There was a murmur in the crowd such as is in the wind just before a storm breaks. Orlando was seen to say something, inaudible to those who watched from a safe distance, but evidently wholly unacceptable to the horse, who heard, and instantly showed his resentment by tucking down his head, and performing a series of calisthenics which might best be described as rotating diagonally. But in connection with all this there remained evident a fact more astonishing, even, than the eccentricities of equine imagination; *for Orlando was still on the horse's back!*

That was a wholly unexpected element, and gave the finishing touch of relish to the whole. The audience roared and stamped and whistled—especially those Smith twins. Over in the schoolhouse doorway, Kitty clung to the lintel, sick and faint.

"Some Boston ridin' academy!" yelled Long Henry Robinson, throwing up his hat.

"You wait—Sea-cook aint through yet!" bellowed the Bishop, his excitement getting the better of his discretion.

And his prophecy was correct; Sea-cook was nothing like through. He didn't want this intruder on his back, and he wasn't going to have him. Moreover, he was a horse of resource and inventiveness out of the common, and intended to display the fact. If ordinary bucking and rearing wouldn't work, a few well calculated hops might—an imitation of mountain-climbing might be of advantage. Out of one corner of his eye Sea-cook espied Joe Beezer's woodpile, conveniently arranged in three chunky sections, and admirably distributed for an exhibition of high jumping.

This opportunity was no sooner seen than grasped, and next instant the audience was treated to the spectacle of Orlando flying over the three wood-

stacks, one after another, and back again. But from Sea-cook's point of view the scheme was a failure. For when he landed, sweating and snorting, Orlando was still with him. This was too much! It was an outrage of all tradition, and with blood in his eye Sea-cook looked about for other experiments.

A LOW fence of stone divided the hotel yard from the street, and with a bound Sea-cook was upon it, attempting an acrobatic feat unequaled in his record. But something went wrong. A stone was loose, perhaps, or rage made his balance unsteady, for there was a sudden crash, a chorus of yells and screams from the spectators, as Sea-cook fell, landing on his side.

Her heart sick with fear, Kitty uncovered her eyes slowly at the sudden hush which fell upon the crowd. He was killed! Oh, surely! How could she look? Yet look she must, and did, the color flooding back into her cheeks with the act. For there beside the fallen horse stood Orlando, uninjured, *and cursing like a man!* The horse was struggling to its feet, apparently also little the worse for wear, and the crowd was closing in around the pair of them, Bishop Coggney hastening to the control of his pet.

As he came face to face with Orlando, he almost started back from the look of cold contempt in the latter's eye. Orlando stood wiping the bone-rimmed spectacles, which were not so much as cracked, and for the first time the Bishop really saw his eyes—dark and blazing they were, and singularly piercing. It was utterly unexpected and made him feel most uncomfortable. He had not wanted this! Perhaps a little conciliation was advisable at this point.

"So Sea-cook couldn't lick you, Mr. Winthrop," he grinned.

"Nor I him!" said Orlando, replacing the spectacles. "I think it was about fifty-fifty."

"Now will I get you another horse," asked the Bishop as they made their way back to the hotel porch, "so we can go on to the ranch?"

Orlando did not reply immediately.

He was looking over in the direction of Kitty, leaning against the edge of the door, and he had suddenly turned very pale. Almost it seemed as though he might be deathly sick in another moment.

"No," he said quietly, at length, "not now. I—I am a bit shaken up; I think perhaps we won't go out till to-morrow. And now, if you will excuse me, I believe I'll go to my room for a while."

Still very white, he moved shakily through the door and disappeared up the stairs, leaving his suit-case, his hat-box and his butterfly-net to the care of the men.

"Well, I'll be—I'll be—gosh-swiggered!" breathed Windy Meeks feebly. "And just as I was about to swear a life of devotion to him, too! Sick, like a girl, when it's all over!"

"However, it *was* all over!" suggested Long Henry Robinson thoughtfully. But no one paid any attention to him. The Bishop stood in utter silence, staring up the empty stairs as at a vision, and slowly the crowd began to disperse. The school-bell tinkled, and the children filed in, those Smith twins last and most reluctantly, with many a backward glance.

CHAPTER V

IT was just after sunset when Orlando caused his second sensation of the day. A ruminative pipe or two eased the hearts of such members of the outfit as were lounging upon Joe Beezer's porch; but when Orlando appeared, that ease was gone, for his two preceding costumes were as nothing to this third. From the suit-cases had come another miracle—this time of creamy pongee, with snowy shoes and a white felt hat of the type known as "sports." He passed them like a wraith in the twilight and—apparently completely recovered from his effort of the morning—walked briskly up the street, that well-known scoundrel of a watchdog of Joe's instantly rising from the step and following him, taking up his post outside of Kitty's gate when Orlando entered thereat.

"What'll he do next?" moaned Long Henry, shaking his head dolefully. "What'll he do next?"

But nobody answered him.

Kitty was just clearing the supper-table when Orlando came. Puzzled by the quality of the step on the porch,—neither heavy enough for riding-boots nor light enough for one of the village women,—she called a rather tentative "Come in," and then her heart caught her breath up short for an instant in a most annoying way. What a portrait of elegance and grace he presented! Just like the pictures of swells at a summer-resort! Her heart thrilled to the silken sheen of his coat; never—no never—had she seen anything so lovely! Taken atop of his performance with the horse, it was almost too good to be true.

"Why, Mr. Winthrop!" she exclaimed.

"I—I hope you are not angry with me for coming again so soon," he said, smiling.

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Kitty. "It is awfully nice of you! Shall we sit in here, or outside?"

"Outside, by all means!" replied Orlando. "It's quite mild out, and the moon is going to be full to-night."

She led the way onto the porch, he carrying some cushions which she gave him, and they settled themselves upon the top step. Moon and sun were still contending for the heavens, the east silver, and a faint pink still lingering in the west. Distantly some men were singing—a rough, swinging tune, sweetened as it receded into the gray heart of the mountains. The village lamps had a magic glow to them to-night, and life was a pleasant thing!

Kitty sighed, deliciously disturbed by the hour, the aspect of her caller and the mood he brought—sighed, and leaned her head back against the column at the foot of which he sat. From his place outside the gate that well-known scoundrel of a watchdog arose and lazily entered, stretching himself at their feet, nose on paws, watchful, adoring eyes fixed on Orlando.

After a time Kitty began to feel that she ought to speak. Suppose he should think her a raw, ignorant country girl

with no manners! And so, though she would infinitely have preferred to sit awhile longer in that precious silence, she broke it.

"How are things going?" she asked.

AT once he understood that she referred to his progress in the silent battle in which he was engaged with his men, although this was their first direct reference to it.

"Not awfully well," he said dolefully. "You see, I—"

"Well?" she encouraged him, feeling that he wished her to do so.

"I just can't seem to do the right thing!" he confided, as though they had talked it all out, gratefully seizing upon the intimacy of understanding that she implied. "Every time I think I'm gaining a little better footing, I make a blunder—and the worst of it is, I honestly don't know what the blunder is!"

The face he turned to her was so full of genuine puzzlement that Kitty gave a little gasp of comprehension. He really didn't know! He had no notion of why the boys resented him, and he was hurt and baffled by it! Without a doubt he wanted help, wanted to know what the trouble was and what he was doing that was wrong. But how on earth could one enlighten him? Who could say that this outfit, one and all, thought him ridiculous, a fop, a ninny that must be got rid of, and that his sick-spell after the incident of the horse might have been overlooked, but his silk suit never? Besides, it was a *beautiful* silk suit, and she liked to see him in it! If the boys only *knew* how much better they would look if they dressed up a little! But the boys' notion of dress was fringed gauntlets and ornamental sleeve-garters! Indignantly she championed his taste in her heart, but aloud she could only voice a stumbling reply.

"You see, the East is so very different," she said. "And out here they think that the only way is the Wyoming way!"

"I suppose so," replied Orlando with a heavy sigh. There followed a long silence then, during which they sat almost immovable while the moon took possession of the world. Kitty watched him furtively. Certainly he was charm-

ing, in a way, as a prince—and as remote! That thought gave her a pang, and she was glad that the shadow of the roof was upon her face. And shortly she was even gladder, for all at once Orlando made one of his wholly unexpected moves. Without any preliminaries he came over close beside her, and taking one of her hands in both of his, pressed it to his lips.

"Oh, Mr. Winthrop!" exclaimed Kitty—without, however, struggling very hard to free herself. "Oh, Mr. Winthrop!"

"Miss Kitty!" he said sharply in a low, tense tone, still holding her hand. "Oh, Miss Kitty—please don't think me fearfully crude or—or crazy, or anything like that, or that I don't know what I'm saying; but I—I love you! Truly I do! Please don't draw away! It's true—I swear it! You are the most wonderful—"

"But Mr. Winthrop!" Kitty found herself gasping, "I—you—"

"Oh, I know you have only known me for two days," he said earnestly, "and that I have made a pretty poor showing during that time! But don't you think that perhaps you could some day—"

KITTY'S head was reeling. This was whirlwind wooing with a vengeance; it took one's breath, one's senses! Who could have been prepared for it? One of the boys perhaps might have rushed in this way, but coming from this cool-seeming, elegant person—just what did he mean by it?

"But you have only known *me* two days!" she protested.

"That's long enough for me to recognize you!" he said. "Oh, Miss Kitty, you haven't been out of my thoughts since I first saw you! Do you—do you think—"

"What?" asked Kitty breathlessly, as he paused.

"Do you think that you could ever care enough for me to marry me?"

Was it possible? Had she heard aright? She looked at him doubtingly, as though expecting him to vanish from before her, very sight. But her heart beat fast, and somehow it was wonderful—wonderful!

"Oh, Mr. Winthrop—" she began.

"Call me Orlando," he said, and it was almost more of a command than an entreaty.

"Very well, Orlando—" she began again.

On the instant he had snapped her up.

"You will!" he cried. "You will marry me!"

"Oh, but Mr.—that is, Orlando," she protested.

"Dearest Kitty," he interrupted solemnly, "you might as well give in. I'm going to win you sooner or later; I am determined! And soon or late, you will have to consent—so you might as well do it now!"

"You're dreadfully bossy," she said, but she laughed a little as she said it. "Suppose I have something to say?"

"Then say it, dearest, by all means," he declared, "provided it isn't that you wont marry me!"

"Well," said Kitty, trying hard to get herself in hand. "I do care—now wait—but! You see, it's this way with me: I belong *here*. Oh, you don't know what the place means to me! I couldn't live anywhere else!"

"But you wont have to," protested Orlando.

"But where I lived I'd have to—well, my husband would have to be thoroughly respected!"

SHE had said it! And for a spell there was utter silence. How would he take it? Had she lost him by her frankness? Her heart beat painfully at the thought, and she watched his still profile with bated breath.

"I see!" he said at length. "You mean I've got to make good, first!"

There was fire in her tone as she replied.

"If only you could really become one of us!" she cried, "and still be yourself! Win the boys over because you are *you*, not by trying to be like them. I wouldn't have you do *that* altogether, for worlds! But win them over you must—if you are to stay. And unless you stay, how can I marry you? For it would mean leaving it all, my home—and I am all that Father has now, to come back to at the end of his long

trips! But even worse than any of these, your going-away would mean that you were—were a failure!"

Again Orlando took his time in answering.

"You are right," he said at length. "And I am going to fight—fight now harder than ever, to prove myself to them—and to you. And I shall win!"

He looked very upright and brave, and somehow not at all ridiculous now, despite the immense bone-rimmed spectacles and the silken garments. Her heart went out to him, and she stood up, almost within his embrace. Instantly his arms were about her, but she repulsed him gently and he submitted, understanding.

"Not until you have won," she said in a low voice.

He picked up her hand and kissed it like a courtier.

"Until I have won," he repeated, taking his leave.

He waved his hat and was gone, followed by the devoted dog.

ALL the while that this was going on, Fred Barringer had been complaining, in the back room of the hotel, about the manner in which his bear-story was being ignored. The audience was fairly attentive, with one exception,—the Bishop,—who sulked behind a week-old newspaper. Suddenly he put it down, bringing his fist upon the table with a bang that startled the crowd.

"I've got it!" he shouted.

"Got what, in heaven's name?" growled Fred; whose discourse had thus been rudely interrupted.

"That bear-hunt you want!" said the Bishop excitedly. "We're gonner fix that angora cat of a silk-pajama boss of ours! You wanted to hunt bear—well, I got an idea you will. Just listen!"

CHAPTER V

IN the gray mystery of the ensuing dawn a strange procession started down the main street of Letterbox, turning off abruptly just beyond the schoolhouse, crossing the meadow, and going over the creek by way of a foot-bridge. There were six members to

this shadowy company, and they moved with great stealth and silence; and in their midst they bore a Something vaguely human in form, though so thoroughly disguised by the horse-blanket in which it was wrapped that its exact character was undefinable. The lean figure of Long Henry Robinson led the way, pushing aside wet branches, finding a path for the burden-bearers; and in the rear the Bishop's burly bulk moved ponderously. It was certainly a weird performance, and had something almost sinister about it—or so it would have seemed to any casual observer had any such been there; however, at this early hour they were without an audience.

Once across the creek, they struck off diagonally over the next field—a harvested alfalfa-patch, treacherous in the dim light, and dotted with haystacks so that it seemed like a village of muskrat houses. Through this place they reached the main road to Le Barge and passing down it for about a mile, again left the well-worn tracks of common usage and plunged into the underbrush at the edge of the timber—still led by Long Henry, a skilled woodsman, and objectionably conscious of it. At length they found a spot suited to their purpose, and the four laid down the thing they carried—most-unpleasantly suggestive of a mummy—and wiped their brows. The Bishop looked about him with approval.

"Fine place!" he commented, nodding his head in satisfaction. "Good, thick underbrush—no buildings within a mile—first class approach for a huntin'-party—everything's great! Let's unwrap him, boys."

They fell to with a will. Fred Barringer pushed back his hat and spat upon his hands.

"Gosh, but he's heavy!" exclaimed Fred. "Who'd have thought it, to look at him!"

The light cordage untied, they rolled the figure over and out of its swaddlings exposed to view—a stuffed bear!

THE creature was fully four feet high, and the taxidermists had posed him in an upright posture, the proverbial staff supporting him. He

was one of the breed known merely as "black," and his coat had once been thick and handsome, but years of service as an ornament in a rear corner of Joe Beezer's bar had thinned it, and in places the hide showed all too plainly, giving him a pathetic, world-worn, weather-beaten look. Originally he had been supplied with two glass eyes, round and golden, but one of these was now missing, and his rowdy countenance was permanently fixed in a leering wink. Taken altogether, he was about as disreputable-looking a bear as one would be likely to find anywhere.

With many expletives they lifted him to his feet and awaited directions.

"Now we wanner set him up in the hawberry bushes somewhere round here," Bishop Coggney announced. "Over there in that thick clump! Easy, now—just so his ears show plain, and you can kind of see his snout. That's the way!"

Very carefully, so as to disturb the underbrush as little as possible, they lifted the stuffed bear into place under the Bishop's directions and then stood back with him to observe the effect. The latter chewed a sprig of timothy as he regarded the result with a critical eye, his head cocked on one side.

"Pull a little branch across his missin' eye!" he said at length.

Fred Barringer accomplished this completing touch, with the air of an artist.

"How's that?" he inquired.

"Slick!" replied a chorus.

"You certainly would be fooled by it," declared Long Henry, "if you didn't know it was a plant!"

"Will he topple over easy?" inquired the Bishop. "He ought to fall over when he's hit!"

"Sure, he'll fall," Windy Meeks assured him. "But one thing worries me. How long are you going to take getting here?"

"All day!" declared the Bishop firmly. "We're going to start clear the other side of town—skirt West Mountain through the timber, and land up here when the feller's half dead with tiredness. Then he's goin' to shoot this here bear after a hard day's huntin', and then when he drags out that twenty-

year-old corpse, we'll kid him out of town!"

"All of which is a big idea, if it works—if!" remarked Long Henry.

"It'll work, all right," growled the Bishop. "All he needs do is agree to come along with us. We'll see to the rest—and the thing will make him such a laughingstock that there won't be room for him in the county, and you know it!"

"I do!" agreed Long Henry, and the party started back toward the hotel through the widening sunrise.

EARLY as it was, Orlando was down when they returned, sneaking in by the back door, and for the most part appearing singly in the dining-room so as not to excite suspicion. At sight of Orlando, however, Windy and the Bishop, who came in together, involuntarily exchanged a glance of surprise. For Orlando wore khaki this morning, in lieu of the white silk shirt; and behold! the big hat was no longer pinned up on one side, but flopped in a natural manner, like anyone's else. Also, instead of the stock, he wore a bandanna handkerchief tied loosely about his throat in a perfectly conventional way. This was good; but unfortunately for his reputation, he was eating eggs in the most extraordinary manner—breaking off the tops and scooping them out with a spoon, instead of taking them fried, like a human. But otherwise it was undeniable that he presented a greatly improved appearance. The Bishop crossed to him at once and without any preliminaries began on the subject which was uppermost in his mind.

"Morning, Mr. Winthrop," said he. "Say, you remember how Fred Barringer was talking yesterday about seeing bear-tracks?"

"Ah! Good morning!" replied Orlando. "Yes, indeed; I remember."

"Well," the Bishop went on, "it's turned out to be a fact, that he really seen them, and it's got the boys all excited. They want to look into the matter. And so we kind of thought that maybe you would be interested too."

"You mean they want to hunt for the creature and wish me to join them?"

"You get me!" replied Cogney.

Orlando looked nonplused, as though the situation were a very serious one, in which he scarcely knew how to act. Finally he swung his camera, which was hung over his shoulder, around and patted it gently.

"You know, I use only *this*, for my sort of hunting," he said. "My game has been secured pictorially almost exclusively. I'm afraid that a gun—"

"But you might make an exception," the Bishop suggested. Then he lowered his voice and leaned over confidentially. "The boys would think it sort of funny if you didn't shoot at all!"

Still Orlando looked perplexed. But after a moment of reflection he gave a reluctant consent.

"If that is really the case," said he, "I suppose I'd better go with you and carry a gun, though I assure you it is against my principles."

WHEN they had finished breakfast, Orlando retired temporarily to his room to prepare for the expedition. When he returned, he looked more like a professor about to set forth upon a scientific undertaking than a rancher on the brink of a bear-hunt. His big hat had been replaced by a cap the peak of which seemed to rest upon the top of his bone-rimmed spectacles; and about him hung his usual collection of impedimenta—field glasses, microscope, a specimen-basket and a camera. With both hands he held firmly and bravely a beautiful new 30:30 rifle. The Bishop arose from his lounging-place on the porch and slouched toward him, wondering how he could persuade him to shed some of those trappings, when a gleam lighted in Orlando's eye, and abruptly brushing by the Bishop with a scant word of apology, he crossed the road, while the Bishop, staring after him open-mouthed, watched him greet—Kitty!

And for her part, Kitty experienced one of those pleasing shocks of the tenderly anticipated abruptly coming true; a warm glow enveloped her as she greeted him.

"Oh!" she said. "Why, where on earth are you off to so early—not to the ranch?"

He tapped his rifle somewhat ruefully.

"No," he said, "it's a bear-hunt!"

"A bear-hunt!" she repeated after him. It was amazing. "But I thought you—"

"You thought right," he said hurriedly. "I don't believe in killing things for sport. But the men were most anxious to go, and to have me go along, and seemed to want me to be a real member of the party, which of course meant carrying a gun. And so after what you said last night, you know, about my making good with them, why, I—"

A flood of pleasure swept her like a warm wave. He was right! It was his chance and he was taking it!

"Good!" she cried. "Oh, I am glad you are going! For if you come out of this with credit,—and I know you will,—it is going to make the greatest difference in your position with them."

"And consequently with you!" he added in a low tone.

"It might be the foundation of—of a good many things," she said looking away, the slow color mantling her cheeks. "A man's real character comes out on a hunt, and nobody knows it better than the boys."

"And you think mine will stand the test!" he said. "Thank you, Kitty."

It made her heart leap to hear him. But she pretended to ignore it. She must, until he had gone through with his probation. No time to weaken now! So she only smiled brightly and turned into the schoolhouse door. "Good luck!" she called over her shoulder.

"I'll see you as soon as we get back," he replied, raising his cap.

MEANWHILE the Bishop had led out a couple of horses, and the rest of the outfit was mounted and ready. There was an air of extreme innocence about the group which would perhaps have warned a more experienced hand, but Orlando was apparently merely delighted at their friendly aspect, and he climbed with considerable confidence and grace upon the mild steed which the foreman had provided. The Bishop eyed him with acrimony as he mounted, a suave exterior hiding a sea of spleen.

The devil and all take the fellow! What in blazes did Kitty mean by smiling on him that way? Well, wait until to-morrow—he, the Bishop, would have a tale to tell that would make her ashamed even to be so much as seen talking to Orlando. And that would be the story of how the owner of the Winthrop outfit spent all day chasing absolutely nothing, and ended by shooting a stuffed bear in full sight of all his men! Meanwhile it was a very pleasant morning. The Bishop rolled a cigarette, lighted it and led the little cavalcade off down the sunny street.

The day was cool with that first hint of winter which is so lovely when it is still overmastered by the warmth of the sun. The air was like a fine sparkling tonic that filled one with the will to do—to ride endlessly under the clean blue sky. It moved the party to song, Orlando gently chanting his favorite French theme, scarcely above his breath.

"Je donnerai Versailles—"

And Windy Meeks, not to be outdone, wailing a well-known chanty in a high falsetto:

"Oh, bury me not on the lone prairie-e-e,
Where wild coyotes howl over me—"

CHAPTER VII

THE farthest outlying house of Letterbox had been passed now, and they were rounding Fossil Hill. The country spread on either hand like a vast private estate, with unfenced, limitless fields, and sage—an ocean of sagebrush—stretching to the left as far as the eye could see. The Bishop spied a familiar though almost indiscernible track ahead, and called out to Barringer:

"Will we cut off here?" he asked with a wink.

"Yep," responded Fred. "It was at the mouth of Fontenell Cañon I seen the tracks." And with a great air of adventure the party left the main road.

He who rides through the brush for the first time feels himself indeed in the wild and woolly West. There is a spaciousness, a hint of the vastness of

the world, about the experience that lifts the heart and invokes the awed respect of the traveler. Furthermore, it is like the descriptions in fiction and scenes in the movies—impossible, yet there before one's very eyes! The Bishop was well aware of this, and he watched the back of Orlando's head attentively. It was affecting him as desired; that was plain. He was already beginning to fall under the spell of excitement which had been planned. And then, even as Coggney watched contentedly, Orlando did the unexpected.

Fifty yards ahead of the horseman a huge jack-rabbit came out of the brush and loped rapidly across the trail. Instantly there was the report of a gun. In his anxiety to show them he was not afraid to shoot, Orlando had lost no time. The rest of the group instantly set up a pandemonium, shouting and laughing and hooting. In their midst, Orlando, getting his nag under control, was the only one who did not smile.

"Hey! What the devil are you shooting at?" yelled the Bishop. "What the—"

"Why, did you not see that wild animal?" inquired Orlando mildly. "I thought—"

"Wild animal!" howled the Bishop, coming alongside, "what did you think it was?"

"It looked like a young antelope."

"Antelope, my eye!" retorted the Bishop. "That was a harmless jack-rabbit!"

"Indeed!" said Orlando, immensely interested. "How very large they are! And how extremely fortunate that I did not hit the poor thing!"

The Bishop looked at him with blood in his eye, positively awed out of the power of speech. But behind him, the others felt no such restraint, rocking in their saddles with joyous mirth. Windy Meeks wiped his eyes of the first tears he had shed in many a day.

"Lord!" said he when he could speak at all. "What a show! And what a name for him!"

"What do you mean—name?" gasped Long Henry.

"He ought to be Antelope Jack after this," said Windy. "Get me?"

"Jack-rabbit—antelope! Of course we do!" replied Fred Barringer with all the proper admiration due to genius. "Antelope Jack it is!"

"Perfect!" agreed Long Henry, slapping his thigh. But somehow, though they laughed anew, the very fact of having given him a nickname brought him a little closer into their own ranks, and they liked him better for it. Orlando could never get a standing there—Antelope Jack had a ghost of a chance.

THE procession regained some sort of order after this, and with the Bishop in the lead with Winthrop, to see that the latter be given every opportunity to make a further fool of himself, they proceeded on their way. The detour they planned was a wide one, and so it was almost noon when they reached the mouth of Holland Creek Cañon and dismounted. It was a lovely spot near a thin stream, which the trees followed out into the desert at regular intervals, marching single file, stiff as soldiers, out of the cool verdure of the cañon. Bishop was the first off his horse.

"We'll camp here!" he announced, "get our dinner, and go on afoot!"

Orlando looked a trifle weary as he dismounted, and he listened to the Bishop's words with some dismay.

"Leave the horses?"

"Bears scares 'em!" replied Coggney briefly. And the rest set about making camp. By the time the meal was ready Orlando had disappeared.

"Where's Antelope Jack?" demanded Long Henry, the cook, a tower of wrath with a frying-pan suspended menacingly. "Are we to wait all day?"

"Not by a long sight," declared the Bishop. "Come on, Windy; you and me'll be nursemaids and go find him!"

They turned into the woods, hallooing as they went, and presently a faint answer rewarded them. A few steps farther on, and there under a low-branched oak tree stood Orlando, gazing enraptured at a huge nest of some sort of insect which hung from a limb, and which he was examining with the aid of his magnifying-glass. The two rangers drew back with a single movement.

"Heh, get away from that!" yelled Windy. "You'll get stung to death!"

Orlando looked around in surprise, beckoning them to come nearer.

"Look out, you!" roared the Bishop. "Leave that thing alone! It's a hornets' nest!"

"I know it!" replied Orlando mildly. "Do come and take a nearer look at it. It's the most perfect specimen I ever saw! If you are very quiet, they won't hurt you!"

"Thanks! Haven't time!" the Bishop returned, keeping a safe distance. "Dinner's waitin'!"

"Oh, I'm sorry if I've kept you!" apologized Orlando, reluctantly putting up his magnifying-glass and joining them. "I didn't realize how the time was going. And it is really a most perfect specimen—"

CONVERSATION lagged on the return trip, but the Bishop kept looking at his boss out of the corner of one eye. What manner of man was this, anyhow, who did not fear hornets! Either it was terribly sporting of him, or it wasn't human!

They did not break camp after dinner, but left their belongings and the horses and set out afoot, turning in toward the wide bosom of the mountain and crossing as great a variety of country as the Bishop could manage to select. Sometimes it was sage, waist-high, trailless, sometimes a forest of cedars; and sometimes they traversed a rolling, open, boulder-strewn upland where the autumn winds swept free and strong, and the mountains spread themselves to view like endless, sleeping monsters. Again it was by the side of a stream that they went, breaking a new track through the underbrush—a no mean task. Though they were actually never more than a few miles from town, a wilder, more adventurous country could scarcely have been found. And as far as the Bishop led, so far Orlando followed, valiantly. Indeed, one might say *easily*, for the whole way he was close at the Bishop's heels, even in advance of him, when something in the way of beetle or plant attracted his eye.

Walking, it appeared, was something Orlando knew how to do, and his wiri-

ness and long habit of nature-studying were standing him in good stead. This was all very well for those that liked walking, but the men of the Winthrop outfit were accustomed to the constant substitute of a good horse's four legs for their own; and as the afternoon waned, they grew tired, if Orlando did not, and the amusing side of the situation began to seem to Long Henry much too long in manifesting itself. At an auspicious moment he drew the Bishop aside sufficiently to get a private word with him.

"Say, Bishop, how much longer?" he panted. "I'm having a good time—not!"

"Wait!" commanded the Bishop. "We'll bring things to a finish in less than an hour. The sun's getting near the top of the mountains now."

"Well, I'd like to see him perform!" pronounced Long Henry, "that is, if he's goin' to!"

"We'll take him across Bear River, then," replied Cogney. "Seems like we should bring him in touch with some sort of bear, seein' we aint as yet shown him any tracks less'n a week old."

"I don't think he realizes that," said Long Henry, "but you're on, about the river. We'll ford it." And he went back to tell the others—with the exception of Orlando, who at the moment appeared to be absorbed in the flight of a perfectly ordinary crow.

THE day was drawing toward a roseate end, when Bear River was actually reached, and the party stood daunted on the bank of that sullen stream. On either hand lay flats of alkali and clay which the water had cut into a considerable arroyo with steep and unstable sides. The river was wide-spread and dark with the constant wash from the banks, and moved slowly as thick cream. To the untutored eye it seemed bottomless, and there it was, stretching away before them, a barrier to progress. Only one alternative offered to turning back, and that was to ford it. On the brink the boys gathered in a little knot and disputed as to which should go first.

"Hey, Bishop, you go!" suggested Long Henry Robinson, an odd gleam in

his eye, as if he felt that Coggnay ought to take the medicine.

"Not me!" the Bishop answered, growling. "I aint takin' no risks at my age. Why, it might be all quicksand out there in the middle!"

"Go yourself, Long Henry!" said Windy Meeks. "It'll do you good if it's up to your neck."

A momentary scuffle ensued upon this, which the Bishop interrupted authoritatively.

"No fooling, now!" he shouted, "Somebody's got to go first; come on, speak up, why don't you?"

From the midst of the momentary silence which this demand produced emerged the voice of Orlando.

"Why, I'll go first, if you like," said he quietly. "I'm not a very good swimmer, but the current is sluggish. I'll go!"

Everybody looked at everybody else, and then at the Bishop, who nodded assent.

"Just as you say, Mr. Winthrop," he said, "though I warn you I've no idea how deep she runs, nor if there's quicksand."

"Oh, that's all right," Orlando DeLancy Winthrop added cheerfully, swinging off his camera and handing it to Long Henry for safekeeping. "I absolve you from all responsibility!"

And to the delight of the audience he proceeded to wade right in.

At the first few steps the water reached only to his ankles. A step or two more, and it reached a few inches higher, midway up his boots. Out into the stream he went, farther and farther, but the waters failed to rise. Toward midstream he grew cautious, feeling his way with dainty gingerliness—but still the water came up no farther, and the men on the bank clung to each other for joy. But when he reached the opposite shore, the tops of his boots still dry, there was something in the expression of his face that made the trick seem not so very funny, after all. He was sarcastic—but with a subtlety which only Long Henry really understood.

"See, you need have no fear!" he called. And shamefacedly they waded in, the lot of them, Long Henry treasuring the camera that had been in-

trusted to him, and commenting to Windy on the situation.

"It was darn plucky!" he declared in an undertone. "He didn't know it was safe."

But Windy wouldn't be converted.

"I aint so sure!" he declared. "Matter of fact, it's impossible to tell if it was accidental or not!"

"Bah!" replied Long Henry. At which juncture the party became reunited on dry land once more and the hunt was renewed.

CHAPTER VIII

A HEAVY silence had fallen on the group, and a boredom so complete, as far as the majority was concerned, that it seemed nothing would relieve it. Then two facts evinced themselves which changed matters. First it became evident that they were at length approaching the hollow where the stuffed bear was hidden, and second, right in this neighborhood, Fred Barringer stopped abruptly and seized the Bishop's arm with a shout.

"What did I tell you!" he yelled. "Fresh bear-track! Now! Now say I'm a liar!"

And there, sure enough, was the track—so new that the bear could not be far ahead of them. In an instant the party came to life, and a general movement of preparedness took possession of them.

The Bishop and Windy, however, were taking counsel of each other. This development was practically unforeseen, and it distinctly complicated matters.

"What'll we do?" said Windy. "S'pose we meet up with a real one! You're gonner have a hard time dealing with Fred!"

"Chances o' fortune," returned the Bishop philosophically. "Got to take 'em! We'll go ahead as arranged. If we meet the real bear, which I admit seems likely, we can't tell what *will* happen! We just got to hope we wont meet it—that's all! But remember, when we come to the plant, Orlando is to fire—and only *him*! Make Fred understand it!"

Windy Meeks nodded, and the party went on, this time with an earnestness born of the new element in it. The woods were dark and full of strange shadows, and the underbrush seemed to move of itself, as though designedly to startle and deceive. The wind had died down with the sun, but the aspens quaked and rustled in a ghostly fashion. The party moved forward silently, and now and again the unaccounted-for snapping of a twig would cause a momentary alarm.

The Bishop looked anxiously about him at every step, and even Orlando put aside his interest in lesser creatures and the ways of wild-flowers, and walked eagerly, his beautiful new rifle ready, his bone-rimmed spectacles fixed on the Bishop's every movement, watching for a cue. There was a look of determination on his face, and he seemed bound to acquit himself with credit if it was his last deed on earth!

FOR the next quarter of a mile the Bishop's soul was cracked with anxiety. Suppose they met the bear? He didn't half like the brutes, anyhow! It was an anxious time. But at last the appointed spot was gained without further signs of the enemy, and then, distantly, in the hawberry bushes, they could discern the creature they had set there in the dawn of this long day. At the length of a gunshot it was completely and marvelously deceptive. It was almost dark now, and in the shadow the creature seemed positively to move, so real it looked. The Bishop's heart swelled with satisfaction as he posted himself at Orlando's elbow, waving back the apparently impetuous aim of the others.

"Now, Mr. Winthrop," he whispered excitedly, "take your time! Right between the eyes!"

With trembling and reluctance Orlando obeyed, squinted his eyes and pulled the trigger. There was a report, a little puff of smoke, and—the stuffed bear had disappeared from sight!

For a dazed moment the Bishop stood wondering. What the devil and all did it mean? Was it the stuffed bear? The memory of those fresh tracks was full upon him and caused him uneasiness.

"You got him!" Long Henry was yelling like a madman. "Come on after him, fellers!"

"After him, nothin'!" thundered Fred Barringer. "He's only wounded! Don't go after a wounded bear in this light! Are you all crazy?"

"That's right!" agreed the Bishop, his own doubts about the identity of the animal confirmed, and seizing upon this solution of the quandary they put him into. "Don't go after him! It's too dangerous!"

"Do you think I really got him?" asked Orlando a trifle piteously.

"Oh, you got him, all right!" declared Long Henry. "He wont go far—that's impossible! And he'll leave a trail."

"Best thing to do is to come back after him in the morning," suggested Barringer. The lot of them were exchanging questioning glances. Evidently the Bishop was not the only one who misdoubted that animal!

"A very good idea," declared Cogney uneasily. "We'll hike back to camp and come back to these parts first thing in the morning!"

A perfunctory search in the immediate vicinity was indulged in by some of the party, but it was done under a chorus of assents to Fred's suggestion, and then they made the best of their way back to camp, while the stars came out piercingly clear on an azure dark sky, and the night shut in like a canopy flung across the tops of the mountains.

WHEN Bishop Cogney awoke, it was already day. There was a stirring and a calling of birds in the trees, and a soft west wind was blowing. Overhead the sky was already blue; but by rolling on one side, he could observe that the little clouds just above the mountain-crest were still of a lovely rosy tint. The air was full of that mysterious urge of the new day, caught at its triumphal entry upon the world, and the Bishop drew it in with great breaths, luxuriating in the mere fact of being alive, before he aroused himself to full consciousness of his affairs.

Suddenly he remembered Orlando and sat up abruptly, surveying the still sleeping camp. There lay Long Henry with his mouth slightly open, his face

particularly thin under the cruel light; there was Windy curled up like a pup, and Fred Barringer asleep face downward. There were Joe and the others, all grotesquely slumbering, and there—there was Orlando's blanket, neatly folded, and Orlando's beautiful new rifle lying on top of it. But nowhere—nowhere was there a sign of the owner!

Had he actually ventured into brush where he thought a wounded and savage bear was in all likelihood lurking, and taken nothing for protection? With the natural difficulty due to his bulk, the Bishop arose and lumbered over to that deserted little pile of goods, to take careful stock of them. There were the blankets, the gun, the field-glasses, the specimen-basket—but *not the camera!* Great heavens, that was it! the camera!

"Hey, fellers, wake up!" the Bishop roared, rushing from one to another of the reluctantly responsive sleepers. "Wake up! That boob of an Antelope Jack couldn't wait to collect his stuffed bear and has gone off to take a photograph of him."

With many a yawn and growl the camp came to life.

"Gone after his bear!" exclaimed Windy Meeks, stretching prodigiously. "With his camera!"

"And if he gets there ahead of us, we're goin' to miss the pleasure of seein' him discover it's stuffed!" moaned Long Henry.

"To say nothin' of givin' him a chance to get rid of it, which he'd be pretty sure to do!" added Windy.

"That is, if it was our bear!" remonstrated Fred Barringer.

"Oh, it was our bear, all right enough," declared the Bishop cheerfully. Things looked far more normal in the day, and his twilight doubts had vanished with the shadows. So had the doubts of the others; only Fred grumbled anything like a question, which was drowned in the general clamor as the search-party set forth, the Bishop, as usual, leading the way, and metaphorically beating his breast as he went.

"To miss it!" he kept muttering over and over, "to miss him goin' after that stuffed animal with a camera! And after all the trouble we've took! To miss it! Hurry, fellers!"

BUT the Bishop was not fated to miss what Orlando was doing that morning; for before they had more than half covered the distance to the spot where the bear from Beezer's bar had been left, they encountered Orlando himself—and not by overtaking him, either, for Orlando was coming toward them.

They came upon him suddenly as they rounded the crest of a little hill, and at the sight of him there was a general outcry and a scattering for shelter, for Orlando was not alone. Far from it! For as he came strolling unconcernedly in their direction he was accompanied by a bear—a perfectly good, real live bear that walked by itself—limping, but still walking, a live and conscious bear with a pink tongue lolling out and, to the stricken and magnifying eyes of the observers, a most savage appearance.

The Bishop was the first to reach shelter, choosing for his trench the nearest group of boulders. From this dubious screen he yelled a warning to Orlando, who was still a hundred yards away.

"Look out, you poor nut! There's a bear right behind you!" screamed the Bishop.

Orlando, however, merely nodded and smiled as he called back:

"Yes, I know it!"

"Then run, for Gawd's sake!" pleaded the Bishop. "You may get away from him—he's awful lame! Run!"

But Orlando was not to be reckoned with now, any more than at other of the preceding critical points in his career. For instead of observing this excellent advice and clearing out at least sufficiently to permit one of the rescue-party to shoot the wild beast, he deliberately turned about and regarded it. Then he stopped short. The bear also stopped. Then—incredible sight!—Orlando sat down upon the little knoll, and the bear sat down beside him, raised itself upon its haunches like a begging dog and held out the wounded paw. Then,—lo and behold!—it could be seen even at this distance that the paw was wrapped in a bandage which Orlando proceeded gently and carefully to readjust, reinforcing it with a clean pocket-handkerchief and ending the performance with

a pat on the creature's head. The bear received all these attentions with a becoming gravity, and at their end he and Orlando both arose and resumed their course.

FROM behind shrub and rock came forth a shamefaced and subdued group of sheep-rangers who strove, and strove in vain, to laugh. Instead, it was Orlando who grinned, though not maliciously, as he and his companion came up with them. It was then perceived that the bear was really quite a small one, after all.

"Here it is!" said Orlando. "Poor little thing! As you see, I wounded its paw last night; but I fixed it up,—it isn't serious a bit,—and I've got some splendid pictures of him!"

The Bishop edged nearer, his face working in a peculiar manner. Then he held out his hand with a gesture worthy of a monarch surrendering his sword. The Bishop knew when he was beaten.

"Mr. Winthrop," he said huskily, "I—I want to shake hands with you, sir! That's a brave thing—bringing in a wild more than half-grown cub!"

"Thank you. But I don't really believe it's a wild one!" protested Orlando as he grasped the Bishop's hand. "See, there's a little ring through one ear."

At this Windy Meeks came forward and examined the creature gingerly but thoroughly. Then he let out a whoop that brought the echoes from the hills.

"Why, it's Frank the dago's bear that got lost!" he yelled.

"So it is," agreed Long Henry, and the rest crowded about confirming, full of amazement.

"What you goin' to do with him, Mr. Winthrop?" inquired Windy.

"Say, go on—call me Antelope Jack," remarked Orlando unexpectedly.

"Call you—" gasped Windy. Then he looked straight into Orlando's eyes—right through the bone-rimmed spectacles for the first time, and held out his hand.

"Jack!" he said.

"That's it," agreed Orlando, returning the strong grip hardily. And then there followed an uproar—like that at

the end of a football game—which the hills echoed again, and the little black bear swayed back and forth to the rhythm of it. And when at length Orlando had shaken hands with everyone and was quite limp in consequence, he made a protesting gesture.

"Now let's go back to town!" said he. "I want to take the cub to a friend of mine for a pet!"

ALL the long way back the Bishop seemed in a daze. Every once in a while he looked over at Orlando and shook his head as though unconvinced that it was not all a dream. And this state of semicomatose lasted all through the noon meal at Joe Beezer's hotel, and far into the afternoon. It troubled Long Henry Robinson, who, after dinner, sat beside the Bishop on the porch while the two of them watched Orlando turn in at Kitty's gate, leading the bear, to the infinite disgust of that well-known scoundrel of a watchdog, who dared not follow.

When man and bear had passed within those sacred precincts, and the two watchers had seen Kitty's arms fly out to welcome her guest in an unmistakable manner, Long Henry broke the long silence.

"Fine feller, Antelope Jack!" he said. "He deserves her more'n any of us do!"

The Bishop said nothing to this. Long Henry, not to be discouraged, persevered in his determination to arouse his friend from a silence so unnatural.

"Well, he's gonner stay. That's pretty plain!" remarked Long Henry. "And for one, I am glad. Whatcher goin' to do about it? Resign?"

"Resign, nothin'! I should say not!" growled the Bishop fiercely. "After the way he led in that bear? Not much! I'm gonner work for him and learn him to run his ranch!"

"But it was a *tame* bear," objected Long Henry Robinson.

"Aw—aw, you aint got no judgment of character!" the Bishop retorted. "He didn't know *that* when he went out after it!"

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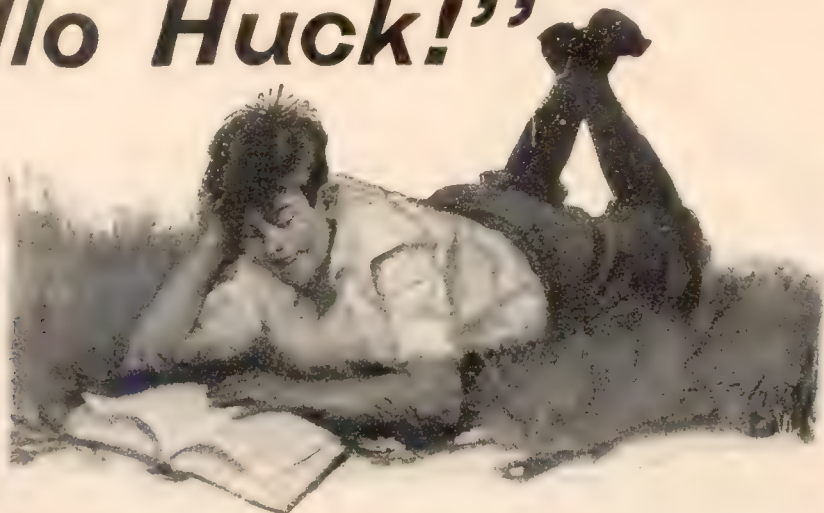
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By RICHARD S. CHILDS

THEY got Scribner out of bed by 'phone at 1:07 A.M. When he arrived at the plant the fire was on three floors of the old building, the shed was already gone, and the Chief had sent in a second alarm.

Fred was already there, and had picked up some men on the street to help him save the patterns in the pattern shop. Two loaded cars stood on the siding ready to go out, but they were too near the burning shed to be moved.

The new building had not yet caught—there was a chance it might be saved yet.

The crowd parted as he approached.

They let him through the fire-line to go into the office and open the safe to get the books. He stuffed his pockets full of bulky papers; then there was nothing to do but stand and watch the firemen trying to save the new building.

He was knocked out of business for months. He realized that most of his customers would cancel their orders and develop cordial relations with his competitors. A reporter touched him on the elbow.

"Oh, yes," said Scribner. "Loss fully covered by insurance."

But in his heart of hearts he knew it was not true. He looked through the papers in

his pockets and found his blanket-insurance policy.

Scribner got a new light on his insurance policy that night.

By the light of the blaze, he tried to read the fine print. When he obtained the full amount of his insurance he would have scarcely enough to restore the buildings and the machinery. He would be in luck if he could get the machinery in less than eight months.

Part of the payroll would have to go on, and the salesmen would have to spend their time in jollyng the customers along. No dividends this year! He would be lucky if he could keep alive his credit. His going business had come to a complete halt. Fire insurance had nothing to compensate for that.

As he watched, the flames began to lap at the new building.

"Oh! You can save that, can't you?" he cried in desperation to the Chief who stood near. "You know, it's fireproof."

The Chief smiled. "Sure, it's fireproof; so is a stove. But the stuff inside will burn fine."

"I've been nervous about this place for years," continued the Chief.

"Why?" asked Scribner, with challenge in his tone. "Is it any worse than Smith & Gaylord's, or Jackson's?"

"Sure it is," said the Chief, earnestly. "They've got sprinklers over there. We were called to Jackson's only last week. They had a nasty little fire in a chute. The sprinkler put it out before we got there. The watchman called us as soon as he heard the bell ring, just as a precaution, but there was nothing to do when we got there."

"I had fire buckets and stand-pipes," said Scribner, "but I didn't feel that I could afford a big sprinkler system."

"Guess you didn't look them up very hard. Jackson's sprinklers didn't cost him anything. His insurance rate went down

eighty per cent. when he put in the sprinklers and saved him \$1,000 a year."

"It would have been worth \$50,000 to me if I had known that before," replied Scribner, looking at his watch. It was just 1:31 A.M. In 24 minutes he had mastered the whole subject: he saw that fire insurance alone would not fully protect a going business.

When Scribner got his temporary office established the next week in what remained of the new building, he wrote us a letter. He didn't say anything about the fire. He told us how much insurance he had carried and what it cost him per year, and he enclosed a rough diagram of his plant as it was before the fire. Our rough calculation showed him that he had a property suitable for a Grinnell Automatic Sprinkler System.

He signed a contract later for Grinnell Sprinklers throughout the new plant.

"Now that you have signed the contract," said our representative, "how did our prices compare with the other fellow's?"

"You were about three per cent. higher," he answered, "but I will buy a sprinkler system only once. If I get the wrong one the expense of changing would be enormous, and I know that yours is standard. Grinnell's protect more property than all the other kinds put together, so there can't be anything very far wrong with it. The others may be just as good, but I haven't time to learn the sprinkler business—I do know I am safe with Grinnell's."

Now, Mr. Reader, is your name Scribner? Are you, too, unaware that you can easily have Grinnell Sprinklers? Send for a copy of the Grinnell Exemption Blank and when you fill that out for us, we can tell you approximately how much sprinklers will save you in cash each year.

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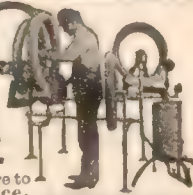
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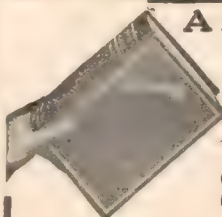
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In some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the fray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. James, late of the United States Public Health Service says, "Patients in an enervated and devitalized state of health—those, for instance, convalescing from protracted fevers, those suffering from a long-standing case of anaemia, all such people in my opinion, need iron. Of late, there has been brought to my attention, Nuxated Iron. In practice, I have found this an ideal restorative and up-building agent in these cases above mentioned."

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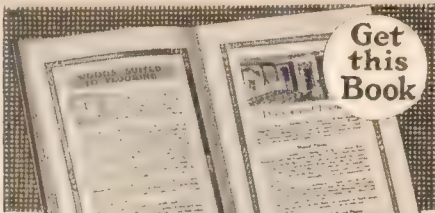
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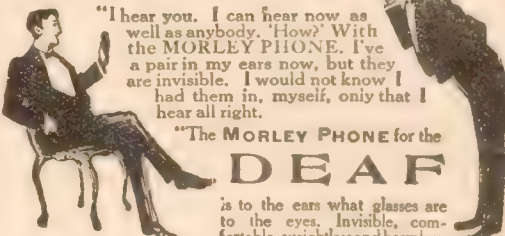
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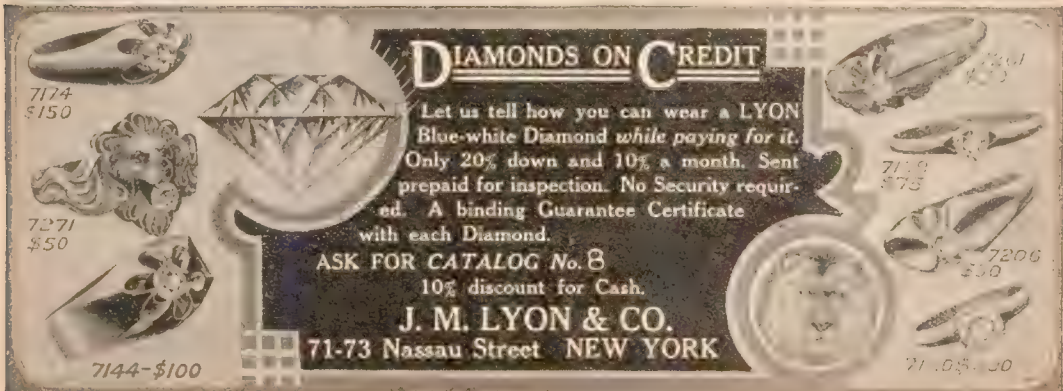


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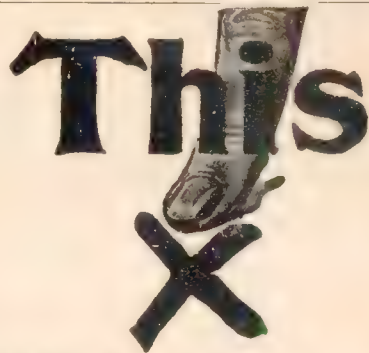
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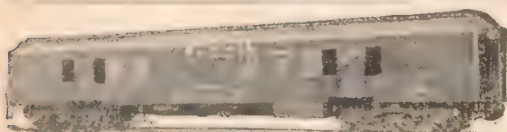
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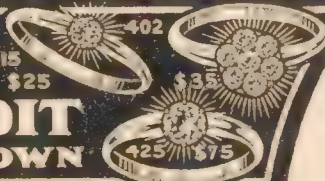
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How I Raised My Earnings from \$30 to \$1000 a week

*The Story of a Young Man's
Remarkable Rise, as Told by Himself*

THREE years ago I was earning \$30 per week. With a wife and two children to support it was a constant struggle to make both ends meet. We saved very little, and that only by sacrificing things we really needed. To-day my earnings average a thousand dollars weekly. I own two automobiles. My children go to private schools. I have just purchased, for cash, a \$25,000 home. I go hunting, fishing, motoring, traveling, whenever I care to, and I do less work than ever before.

What I have done, anyone can do—for I am only an average man. I have never gone to college, my education is limited, and I am not "brilliant" by any means. I personally know at least a hundred men who are better business men than I, who are better educated, who are better informed on hundreds of subjects, and who have much better ideas than I ever had. Yet not one of them approaches my earnings. I mention this merely to show that earning capacity is not governed by the extent of a man's education and to convince my readers that there is only *one* reason for my success—a reason I will give herein.

One day, a few years ago, I began to "take stock" of myself. I found that, like most other men, I had energy, ambition, determination. Yet in spite of these assets, for some reason or other I drifted along without getting anywhere. My lack of education bothered me, and I had thought seriously of making further sacrifices in order to better equip myself to earn more. Then I read somewhere that but few *millionaires* ever went to college. Edison, Rockefeller, Hill, Schwab, Carnegie—not one of them had any more schooling than I had.

One day something happened that woke me up to what was wrong with me. It was necessary for me to make a decision on a matter which was of no great consequence. I knew in my heart what was the right thing to do, but something held me back. I said one thing, then another; I decided one way, then another. I couldn't for the life of me make the decision I knew was right.

I lay awake most of that night thinking about the matter—not because it was of any great importance in itself, but because I was beginning to discover myself. Along towards dawn I resolved to try an experiment. I decided to cultivate my will power, believing that if I did this I would not hesitate about making decisions—that when I had an idea I would have sufficient confidence in myself to put it "over"—that I would not be "afraid" of myself or of things or of others. I felt that if I could smash my ideas across I would soon make my presence felt. I knew that heretofore I had always begged for success—had always stood, hat in hand, depending on others to "give" me the things I desired. In short, I was controlled by the will of others. Henceforth, I determined to have a strong will of my own—to *demand and command what I wanted*.

But how shall I begin? What shall I do first? It was easy enough for me to determine to do things—I had "determined" many times before. But this was a question of will power, and I made up my mind that the first step was to muster up enough of my own will power to stick to and carry out my determination.

With this new purpose in mind I applied myself to finding out something more about will power. I was sure that other men must have studied the subject, and the result of their experience would doubtless be of great value to me in understanding the workings of my own will. So, with a directness of purpose that I had scarcely known before, I began my search.

The results at first were discouraging. While a good deal had been written about the memory and other faculties of the brain, I could find nothing that offered any help to me in acquiring the new power that I had hoped might be possible.

But a little later in my investigation I encountered the works of Prof. Frank Channing Haddock. To my amazement and delight I discovered that this eminent scientist, whose name ranks with James, Bergson and Royce, had just

completed the most thorough and constructive study of will power ever made. I was astonished to read his statement, "The will is just as susceptible of development as the muscles of the body"! My question was answered! Eagerly I read further—how Dr. Haddock had devoted twenty years to this study—how he had so completely mastered it that he was actually able to set down the very exercises by which anyone could develop the will, making it a bigger, stronger force each day, simply through an easy, progressive course of Training.

It is almost needless to say that I at once began to practice the exercises formulated by Dr. Haddock. And I need not recount the extraordinary results that I obtained almost from the first day. I have already indicated the success that my developed power of will has made for me.

But it may be thought that my case is exceptional. Let me again assure you that I am but an average man, with no super-developed powers, save that of my will. And to further prove my contention, let me cite one or two instances I have since come across, which seem to show conclusively that an indomitable will can be developed by anyone.

One case that comes to my mind is that of a young man who worked in a big factory. He was bright and willing, but seemed to get nowhere. Finally he took up the study of will training, at the suggestion of Mr. W. M. Taylor, the famous efficiency expert of the Willys-Overland Company, and in less than a year his salary was increased 800%. Then there is the case of C. D. Van Vechten, General Agent of the Northwestern Life Insurance Company, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Just a short time after receiving the methods in will development suggested by Prof. Haddock, he felt that they would be worth from \$3,000 to \$30,000 to him.

Another man, Mr. H. D. Ferguson, residing in Hot Springs, Ark., increased his earnings from \$40 a week to \$90 a week in a remarkably short space of time after he began the study of will training. These are but a few—there are many other equally amazing examples which I personally know about. And aside from the financial gain, this training has enabled thousands to overcome drink and other vices almost overnight—has helped overcome sickness and nervousness,

has transformed unhappy, envious, discontented people into dominating personalities filled with the joy of living.

Prof. Haddock's lessons, rules and exercises in will training have recently been compiled and published in book form by the Pelton Publishing Co., of Meriden, Conn. Mr. Pelton has authorized me to say that any reader who cares to examine the book may do so without sending any money in advance. In other words, if after a week's reading you do not feel that this book is worth \$3, the sum asked, return it and you will owe nothing. When you receive your copy for examination I suggest that you first read the articles on: the law of great thinking; how to develop analytical power; how to perfectly concentrate on any subject; how to guard against errors in thought; how to drive from the mind unwelcome thoughts; how to develop fearlessness; how to use the mind in sickness; how to acquire a dominating personality.

Some few doubters will scoff at the idea of will power being the fountainhead of wealth, position and everything we are striving for, and some may say that no mere book can teach the development of the will. But the great mass of intelligent men and women will at least investigate for themselves by sending for the book at the publisher's risk. I am sure that any book that has done for me—and for thousands of others—what "Power of Will" has done—is well worth investigating. It is interesting to note that among the 150,000 owners who have read, used and praised "Power of Will," are such prominent men as Supreme Court Justice Parker; Wu Ting Fang, Ex-U. S. Chinese Ambassador; Lieut.-Gov. McKelvie, of Nebraska; Assistant Postmaster-General Britt; General Manager Christeson, of Wells-Fargo Express Co.; E. St. Elmo Lewis; Governor Arthur Capper, of Kansas, and thousands of others.

As a first step in will training, I would suggest immediate action in this matter before you. It is not even necessary to write a letter. Use the form below, if you prefer, addressing it to the Pelton Publishing Company, 31-H Wilcox Block, Meriden, Conn., and the book will come by return mail. This one act may mean the turning point of your life, as it has meant to me and to so many others.

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Law training wins man high place in big business

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After long study and deliberation the directors chose not a steel expert, nor a banker, nor a financier. They selected a lawyer.

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James Stillman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National City Bank of New York, predicts that "in the next ten years every executive in a bank, and most business executives will have to have a law training." The demand for law trained men grows daily stronger. Are *you* law trained?

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"Close the doors! Let no one out! An accident has occurred, and nobody's to leave the building."

There was but one person near either of the doors, and as he chanced to be a man closely connected with the museum,—being, in fact, one of its most active directors,—he immediately turned

of the greatest detective in the world

about and in obedience to a gesture made by the attendant, ran up the marble steps, followed by some dozen others.

At the top they all turned, as by common consent, toward the left-hand gallery, where a tableau greeted them which few of them will ever forget.

Tragedy was there in its most terrible, its most pathetic, aspect. The pathos was given by the victim,—a young and pretty girl lying face upward on the tessellated floor with an arrow in her breast and death stamped unmistakably on every feature,—the terror by the look and attitude of the woman they saw kneeling over her—a remarkable woman, no longer young, but of a presence to hold the attention, even if the circumstances had been of a far less tragic nature. Her hand was on the arrow, but had made no movement to withdraw it, and her eyes, fixed upon space, showed depths of horror hardly to be explained even by the suddenness and startling character of this untoward fatality.



Anna Katharine Green

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My magazine explains the rules by which small investors have made wise and profitable investments—how \$100 grows into \$2,200—the actual possibility of intelligent investment.

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No Money Down. No C. O. D.

Easy Monthly Payments

Maker and user deal direct. You are your own salesman. You pay yourself the \$51. Own this master typewriter at the rate of \$3.00 per month.

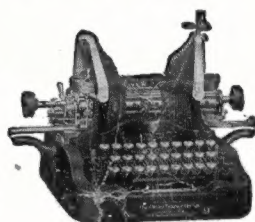
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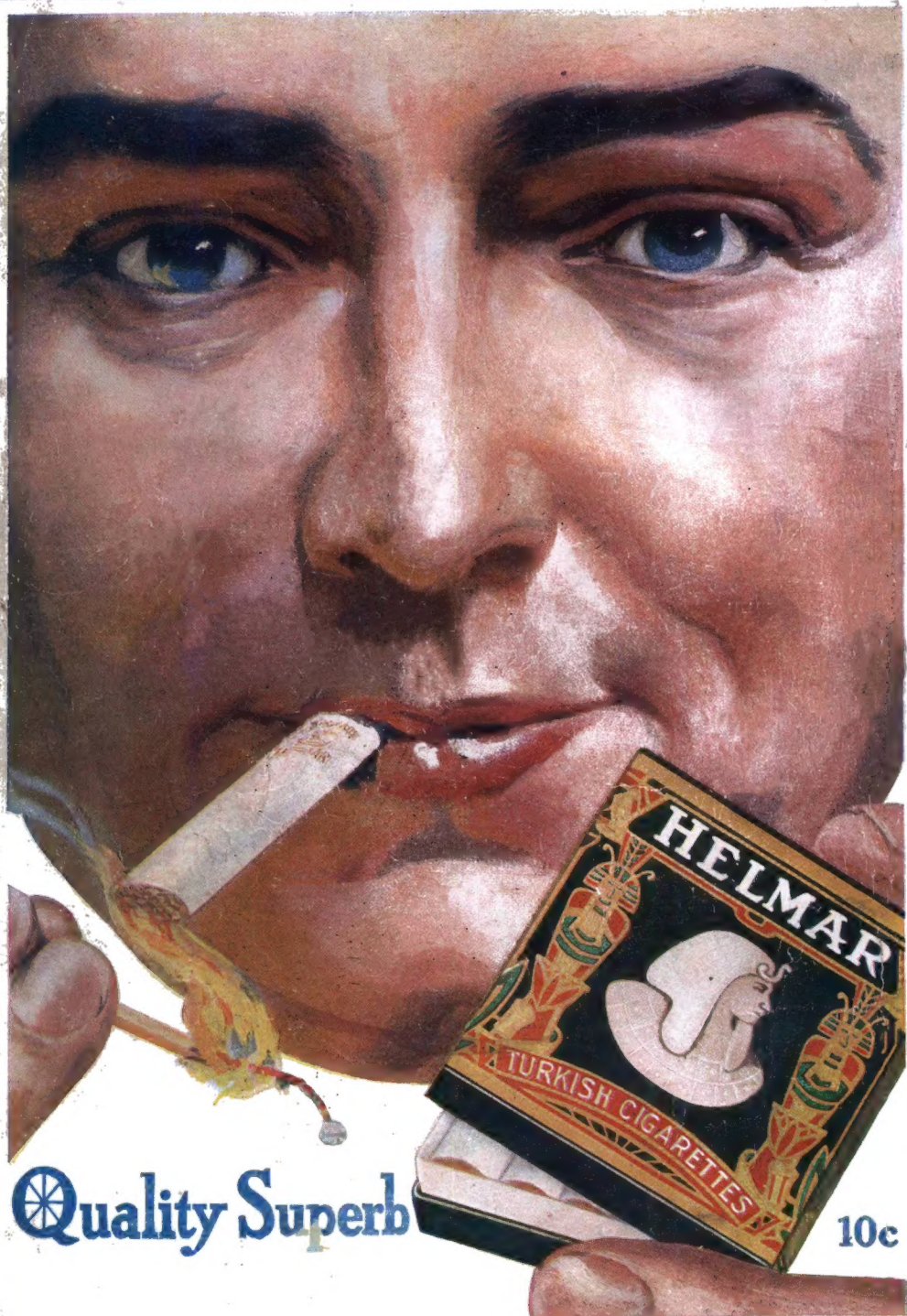
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Name.....

Address.....

References.....



 **Quality Superb**

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